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My dear Mr. [unclear]

1921



My dear Mother -

1951

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THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An Illustrated Quarterly

EDITED BY SHELDON CHENEY

VOLUME II



NEW YORK

1917-1918

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F22.95
T345
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Foreword for Volume Two

WITH this issue THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE enters upon its second year. It faces the future with new faith that there is room in America for one magazine devoted to the serious side of theatre art. The four issues that now stand on the shelf have been largely experimental, and there will be further changes and adjustments before the publication finds its exact place. But it has proven that a definite need exists for a thoroughly progressive dramatic journal, a publication devoted to the art rather than the business of the theatre.

The outstanding change at the beginning of the new year is one of location. In Detroit we were necessarily isolated artistically and dramatically. In New York we shall be in touch not only with all the "regular" producing theatres, but with the largest of all the scattered groups of insurgent producing companies.

The publication will remain primarily the organ of the progressives — which means that we shall maintain contact with the experimental playhouses throughout the country. On the other hand we recognize that we have been too narrowly concerned with a limited movement; that in order to record all signs of progress toward a better theatre art in this country it is necessary to examine all new productions in both the regular and the insurgent playhouses. We shall attempt to deal justly with the business theatre, while continuing to resist those forces of commercialization and vulgarization upon which we have declared war.

For the rest we re-subscribe to certain aims set forth in the foreword of our initial issue: "THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE is designed for the artist who approaches the theatre in the spirit of the arts and crafts movement, and for the theatregoer who is awake artistically and intellectually. To these it will offer a news medium and a forum for the expression of original ideas. Its material will be sought not alone in the little theatres and art theatres, but wherever the creative spirit touches theatre work, whether in professional or non-professional channels.

"To help conserve and develop creative impulse in the American theatre; to provide a permanent record of American dramatic art in its formative period; to hasten the day when the speculators will step out of the established playhouse and let the artists come in: such are the aims of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE."

And finally we repeat: "We intend not to be swallowed by the movies."

S. C.





Model by Lee Simonson for Act II of Gluck's opera *Iphigenia in Tauris*. The columns are of terra cotta color, their bases blue. The background is a deeper indigo blue, with frieze of fighting gods in red.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

Copyright, 1917, by Sheldon Cheney

Volume II

DECEMBER, 1917

Number I

The Painter and the Stage

By LEE SIMONSON

I

THE importance of scenery is the importance of a background. Without its appropriate background nothing can be wholly sensed or completely experienced. In the end Art beautifies life by deliberately decorating everything that in life is "up stage"—the daily background of walls, furniture, balconies, gardens, streets, bridges and house fronts. And we are impelled to decorate the shifting backgrounds of the stage itself, the moment the stage becomes vital to us.

Perhaps because I am a decorator by instinct, nothing exists for me independently of its setting. The beauty of gothic tracery lived for me once in a hillside chapel in Brittany. I have seen far more important "examples" wedged in museums, and forgotten them. I can see no painting independently of the wall, or the other pictures near by. The physical appearance of a book affects my ability to read it. In a concert hall I long for a singer standing against a gold or flowered screen in order that I may surrender myself wholly to Schumann or Schubert. Wagner's *Ring* has always been an opera to me, never a legend, because of the dingy settings, slimy and dirty in color, dingy even when new, which the opera house of New York (and of Munich, for that matter) perennially offers. As the gods pick their way over sallow mounds, papier mâché rocks, so strangely stratified, I seem always to see a dreary corner of suburbia, as yet "undeveloped." At any moment a sign "Choice Lots for Sale" will gleam through the tree trunks, and the clang of a distant trolley rise above the dirge of Rhine-maidens. I have listened to Wagner's score. I have heard Fremstadt, or Goritz. But I have not been at the beginning of the world watching gods and heroes shape the destiny of men.

Now, it is this illusion of not being at a play, but in the domain of the play itself, which is the aim of all drama which pretends to express anything whatsoever. And in the matter of settings that will maintain this essential illusion, and not destroy it, there are only two alternatives: either the spectator's imagi-

nation must supply the background—and the *Ring* could be fitly sung against a gigantic curtain of blue, just as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could be played against one of green—or the play must be acted before a background that is a piece with its intention. It was to preserve the essential illusion in the playhouse that every cult of what we call the modern scenic movement has arisen.

Unfortunately there is so little intention in current productions, let alone poetry and imagination, that our best talents, such as Robert Jones', are too often wasted in creating spacious backgrounds for polite farces. Scenery, to be sure, should heighten the mood of a play and dramatize its intention. But what is there to heighten, or dramatize with line and composition, in the flimsy whimsicality and the tepid wit of *Good Gracious Annabelle* or *A Successful Calamity*? The last act of *The Devil's Garden* was another instance of the artistry of a setting dwarfing the feebler artistry of a play. In that act a murderer is to wrestle with his soul. The room rose above with couch and chairs, and a hearth in firelight loomed stately and mysterious. One waited for the play to fill the scene. But the play maundered, babbled sentimental platitudes, and stumbled to a mechanical end. And the room stood waiting, while the play literally expired in it, as a sick puppy might die whimpering in the aisle of a church. Give Jones richer material, such as *Til Eulenspiegel* or Ridgely Torrence's negro plays, and we have a hint of what Jones might do with *The Misanthrope*, *Electra* or *Rosmersholm*. The dilemma is unavoidable, and it will persist until we evoke an indigenous Reinhardt, a Barker or a Copeau, producing in his permanent theatre plays that demand an artist to create their backgrounds, and providing a technical staff capable of teaching the stage designer his craft, and a workshop where he can execute his ideas.

At present the only such centers are the little theatres, the art theatres and the community playhouses which have been endowed or built until they begin to dot the width of the country from one seaboard to the other. Some like Maurice Browne's theatre in Chicago have maintained a unique standard, others have lapsed into fads, been merely smart when they intended to be witty, or speculated in thrillers like any vaudeville broker. But they continue to produce *Deirdre*, *The Life of Man*, *The Sea Gull*, *The Trojan Women* or *Bushido* about as frequently as Broadway continues to produce trash. They have, on the whole, achieved organization in which intelligent coöperation between a producer and scene designer is possible. And for that reason

they will continue to breed scene designers faster than our chaotic "commercial theatres" can use them.

In fact, up to now this has been the little theatres' most emphatic contribution to the American stage and their most certain success. In New York, at any rate, they have as yet developed no school of acting as the Abbey Players did, nor bred a producer whose instinct for theatrical values could for a moment challenge Arthur Hopkins' or Mrs. Hapgood's; nor inspired a school of native playwrights. But they have everywhere stimulated the art of scene designing until it has begun to display the continuity and the momentum of what we call a "school" or a movement.

During the first year of the Washington Square Players at the Bandbox Theatre, Goodman and Moeller were, I imagine, often incensed at the frequent remark of critics and audiences, that the stage settings were better than the acting and the plays. They had a right to be incensed, for it is far easier to produce new stage settings than it is to achieve a new method of stage direction or write modern drama. Producers and actors bred upon Shaw's later plays are as bewildered by *The Sea Gull* or *The Cherry Orchard*, as conductors capable of successfully bringing their orchestras through *Tristan* once a week were bewildered by the first scores of Richard Strauss. Every tradition of acting, every trick of stage dialogue, every method of getting emphasis and "building up climaxes" is so completely ignored that an entirely new technique must be invented.

But the art of stage scenery has no tradition. It is the one craft which has remained wholly untouched by any trace of æsthetic taste. While successive publics assimilated Beardsley, Whistler, Degas and Renoir, audiences, whether at Bowery melodrama or at the Metropolitan Opera House, witnessed scenery invariably painted like the panoramic landscapes of the English Academy in the year 1852. So to-day a designer has only to transfer to the stage an adaptation of Beardsley's massing of black and white, the tinted monochromes of a Whistler nocturne, the elements of a Japanese print, a poster, or even an architectural water-color, and he is greeted with ripples of applause by astonished audiences who view him as a daring innovator. Every innovation in stage-craft we have witnessed in America is based upon the æsthetic discoveries of twenty years ago. We continue to be amazed by the presence within the frame of a proscenium of the very things that even the trustees of art museums now take for granted within a picture frame. In fact, it is impossible

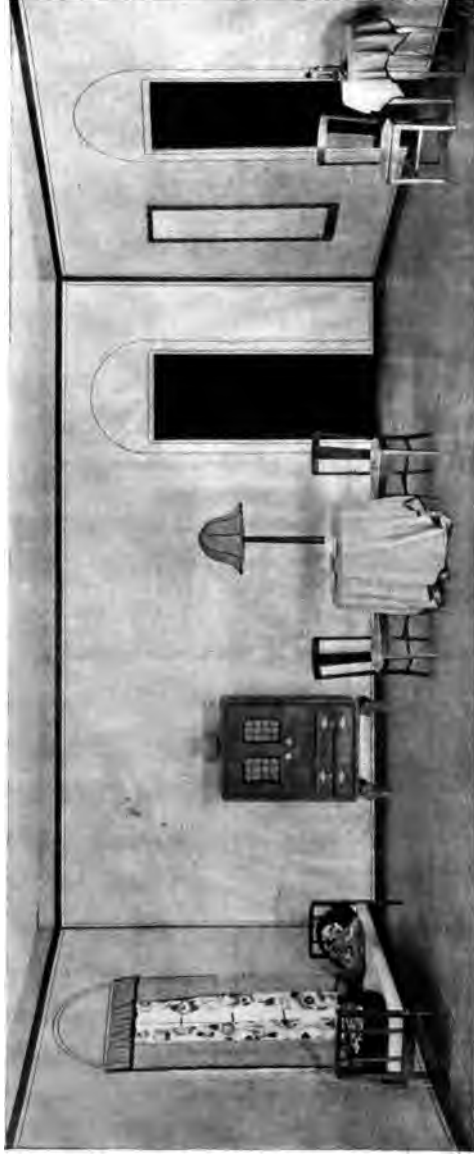
for any man capable of designing a poster, a piece of furniture, a book-cover, or any picture that would be rejected by the Academy, to design a stage setting that will not seem revolutionary. Given an instinct for decoration, the rudiments of good taste, an understanding of architectural form, and the sense of color which to-day any painter of twenty-five has inherited, a painter cannot avoid designing settings which in one way or another are significant.

We hear a great deal of a special "sense of the theatre," as though it were a separate intuition, developed only after a somewhat devout novitiate. Nothing is further from the truth. Precisely, because stage setting is but another form of decoration, a decorator can adapt himself as readily to the conditions of the stage as he adapts himself to the space allotted to him by an architect or determined by his own frame. So rarely is an American theatre equipped with a diffused lighting system, a dome or a "kuppelhorizont," a sliding stage or one capable of being raised and lowered in sections, that half a stage designer's energy is spent, not in designing, but in sacrificing the scale and scope of his original vision to devise something which the electrician can light with a row of footlights and one or two "spots," and a stage manager "fly," with a system designed for the wings and back drops of a Grand Opera House of thirty years ago. Craig, to be sure, banishes the painter from the theatre, along with the actor. But despite the prestige of this particular augur (pending the day when plays shall have become symbolic pantomimes), nothing is more patent than the fact that painters everywhere, though they have not changed the theatre's destiny, have been valuable recruits in its regeneration.

Maxime Dethomas, a French illustrator, at his first try designed settings for the *Théâtre des Arts* which achieved the most difficult of all things in stage setting,—stylistic realism,—the shop of a laundress, which had beauty of line, spacing and color. Fritz Erler, the Munich painter, designed the sets for one of Reinhardt's productions of *Hamlet*—a simpler and more intense background for a tragedy than Urban's stippled battlements, or his grandiose banquet hall for Hackett's recent production of *Macbeth*. Robert Lawson and I were painting when the Washington Square Players called upon us for scenery. Both of us, I think, had never been nearer the stage than an orchestra chair; within a season we had designed settings for every type of play,—comedies, pantomimes, fantasies and farce. Rollo Peters abandoned painting for scene designing. Bakst is another instance



Model by Lee Simonson for the market-place scene of *Pierre Patelin*. The town seen through the arch is a succession of bright yellow and carmine roofs against a turquoise sky.



Setting for *The Magical City* as designed by Lee Simonson and produced by the Washington Square Players. The walls were of purple burlap, the doors gold, the furniture blue, the cushions, coverings, and lamp orange and yellow.

of a similar conversion. And in almost every case the stage settings of these painters have qualities of design, a pitch of style, never evinced in their painting. Dethomas' vigorous illustrations are far less significant æsthetically than his first stage set. Erler's portraits are competent and commonplace. The same holds true of Bakst's as compared with his work for the Russian Ballet, and of Orlik's canvases contrasted with his setting of *A Winter's Tale* at Reinhardt's Theatre. Dulac's masks and costumes for a play by Yeats escape just that element of prettiness which vitiates his successful illustrations. Hugo Ballin has recently staged "movies," and by all accounts his settings there are far more fundamentally decorative than his mural panels for which he has been thrice crowned by the Academy.

The catalogue is incomplete, but it will augment, because the stage to-day supplies the only opportunities for decoration capable of awakening a decorator's imagination and stimulating his creative energy. Mural painting is moribund as a result of the neo-classicism of American architects, who continue to turn Corinthian temples into post-offices, Roman baths into railway stations, and Doges' council chambers into the reading rooms of public libraries. In consequence, decorative painting in America is usually confined to the pages of a magazine or a picture frame. When I was installing a few stage-models at the first Independent Exhibition of Painters and Sculptors last year, Rockwell Kent admitted his eagerness to attempt scenery. To-day, a critic remarks of one of his Newfoundland landscapes: "A work which reaches force of statement through an appreciation of theatrical values." Why should the stage not profit by them? Jules Guerin, Henry McCarter and Maxfield Parrish are others who would gain stature on the stage. I hear of models for a production of *Snow-White* in Parrish's Cornish studio. Meanwhile we must read, in the program of *A Kiss for Cinderella*, Mr. Hewlett's acknowledgement that his most effective background is adapted from one of Parrish's pictures. And in the last act of Sheldon's *The Garden of Paradise* Urban transferred to the stage one of Parrish's covers for the "Ladies Home Journal," with the result that what we call a new era in the staging of musical comedy began. But Parrish himself is still without the theatre. Given a stage, adequately equipped and with a flexible lighting system, and I would set Kent designing *The Tempest*, Guerin *Aida* or *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, Parrish *The Merchant of Venice*, Dulac *The Magic Flute*, McCarter *Rheingold*, and using half a dozen more who had never staged plays before,

provide an amazingly beautiful series of productions. Such a season might not produce the synthesis for which the devotees of the new theatre are waiting, but its visions would provide the most fertile soil in which a "newer" art of the theatre might grow.

II

Once within the theatre the artist's first battle is with the great American god—Grey. The constant prejudice he will have to overcome is the antipathy of audiences and actors to color. For on the stage it is still a dogma that a background must be dark or grey in order to stay back—a theory which in painting is always discredited and is applied only in such art schools as Julian's, into which the ambient light of day never enters. Painting has after a century struggled free of the omnipotence of brown.

The scene designer will have to struggle with the omnipotence of grey. A generation ago the way to make a portrait head "live" was to pick out the high-lights, particularly on the forehead, in a taffy-like mixture of ochre and white—this was light—and place the whole against a syrupy mixture of brown. This was shadow. Cezanne, Van Gogh and Renoir have taught us otherwise. And just as light in painting is no longer a subtle or sentimental spotlight, the light of the stage must achieve the harmonious welding of color masses.

The outcry comes, "But you can't see the actor." I reply that the actor is always visible. Any moving body is more conspicuous than the body against which it moves. A monk in grey against the flaming walls of the Grand Cañon would present an excellent target for any artillery officer. The most deliberate attempt to disguise moving objects—camouflage—succeeds so long as a gun or a man stands still. But no system of color-spotting will render invisible a ship on the sea or a cannon moving across a hill. It is true that a spot of yellow the size of a button will be conspicuous on a sheet of grey cardboard. And it is on this principle that most designing for the modern stage is based—color in the actor's costumes, and subdued backgrounds. But it is also true that a spot of yellow is even more conspicuous on a purple cardboard—a psychological law proven by countless posters as well as by half a century of impressionism. The scene of *Overtures* was based on the costumes Mrs. Holley had chosen for the four women: vivid green for two, purple for the others. I made the walls of the room gold, emphasized only by black lines, the door spaces backed

with black velvet, the windows hung with orange silk. Nothing could have been more brilliant than this background, but the four women detached themselves completely and dominated the scene. They were, if anything, too visible. If Moors and Arabs can greet or stab each other against the vivid house-fronts of their Mediterranean towns, why cannot the actors of a Biblical farce such as *The Sisters of Susannah* be seen against the orange walls I set for them, in Locker's costumes of emerald, turquoise and amethyst? In *The Magical City* Miss Mower stood robed in jonquil yellow in a room hung with purple burlap; through the window showed a silhouette of skyscrapers in a peacock sky. Would she have dominated the scene more completely had the walls been grey, and the furniture not blue with yellow cushions, but a somber mahogany brown, upholstered in discreet lilac?

As a nation we are unaccustomed to use our eyes. A spot of color distracts most of us, as a glass of wine befuddles a teetotaler, and for the next half hour we are unable to concentrate upon anything. On every steamer there are a goodly number who cannot look at the Bay of Naples except through smoked glasses. And in every audience a majority expects the designer to provide smoked glasses for them.

In deference to them, and from a false sense of chivalry to the play itself, has arisen the doctrine of the playwright's necessary humility. Jones has expressed this most picturesquely in an interview attributed to him: "I give this present form of stagecraft one more year to live—for one more year we will have Art Nouveau with us, striding across our backgrounds—distracting our gaze from the actors, and murdering thought. . . . For one more year orange and green hoops of gold and wigs of crimson will stagger zigzagging to reportorial bliss. For one more year these over-accentuated and inanimate objects will scream across the footlights and then —." One might retort: "For a few more years blank walls and towering draperies on which trickle blue or amber light will seem the only fitting background for poetry; for a few more years spewing floods of yellow from search-lights on a thousand figures prancing by night in a stadium will seem the acme of a beautiful festival—and then." It is a damning commentary on our plays if so many of them seem to require the discreet twilight of an invalid's room with the blinds drawn. Our thought in the theatre is not very vital if it so easily takes to cover at the sight of ornament, like a white rabbit scenting a hound. I long for plays in which we shall hear

the baying of the hounds of spring or the hounds of heaven, and which will vibrate in dramatic unity with red and crimson, orange and gold.

Above all I crave the advent of drama vigorous enough to demand all the splendor, the color and the sensuous joy of which the modern palette is capable. The day must come when the scene designer need be no more concerned about distracting us from the play than the artisans who painted the jubilant windows of Chartres were fearful of distracting worshippers from the mysteries of high mass. Any ritual that has ever fundamentally answered the cravings of a group, has always accepted sumptuous and brilliant adornment. The screens of the temples of Japan are brilliant with silver and gold, the mosques of India and Persia begemmed with tiles. The Greeks gilded their Olympian Zeus and painted the metopes of the Parthenon. If acting ever becomes the ritual which Craig dreams, it will evolve its background of pomp and pageantry even in its most tragic moments.

The two most intensely tragic performances of Greek plays I have ever witnessed were in the brilliant sunlight of the open air. At the Harvard Stadium, in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, spears and helmets flashed, and the red scarfs of the heralds flamed in the happy radiance of a June day. But the wail of Cassandra was, none the less, infinitely terrible. At the New York Stadium, during Barker's presentation of *The Trojan Women*, the lament of Hecuba evoked pity and terror, although she did not stand in the gloom of drapery and a dark portal.

So I would welcome modern painters to the theatre, hoping that they will bring with them not only the dusk of Appia and the moon of Craig, but also the sun.



A Note About Lee Simonson

By HIRAM KELLY MODERWELL

NEVER mind where Lee Simonson was born. I think it was in New York, about thirty years ago, and I am sure it was at the conventional early age. The value of a biographical note such as this lies only in suggesting the influences which mingled in the artist's soul to produce his art. *Who's Who*, regarded merely as a collection of names and dates, has no other purpose, I suspect, than to feed the vanity of those listed in its pages. But read for the cumulative connotations of its abrupt words and



Model by Lee Simonson for *The Sisters of Susannah*. The walls are orange, almost coral; the lattice in the pavilion is purple and gold; the palms are black against a dense blue sky.



Settings for *Overtones*; as designed by Lee Simonson and produced by the Washington Square Players. The walls are gold, the curtains and draperies orange edged with black, and the furniture is black.

terse abbreviations, I find it eloquent, just as Ruskin found *Lycidas* eloquent when he supplied the lineage of its groping vocabulary.

"A. B. Harvard," for instance, signifies that the subject spent the formative years of his mind in an atmosphere of faded liberalism like that which produced the factory system and the Boer War in England, and the Colorado coal strike and the anti-trust law here. This liberalism produces either a gentlemanly contentment with the best of all possible worlds, or else a deep resentment, a bigotry indeed, which seeks violently to force the truth on all who will listen. Simonson in Harvard became the bigot. Literally, he saw red, where Cambridge preferred to see a pervading Whistlerian twilight. For he became interested in what was vaguely known among undergraduates as "modern art," and made splendid copy out of it for the college magazines. He remained for years a tradition in Cambridge, "the best writer of English Harvard had had in ten years."

Now art as copy was admirable to the collegiate mind, but art for itself was heresy. When it was understood that Simonson had gone to Europe to become a painter (and a "modern" at that) it seemed merely that another good writer had gone wrong. But, as a matter of fact, Cambridge had made him so hungry for vivid sensations that he could assimilate the routine of his craft three times as quickly and surely as the mere conscientious pupil. In Paris he was a sort of free-lance student, working at Julian's until the gloom of the place got on his nerves. After that he went wherever he could find something that he seemed to need. He received the stimulation of radical theories in France, the love of powerful color in Italy, and the appreciation of clean craftsmanship in Germany. But always it was the strong perfumes that lured him. For "copy" for his canvases he went not to cloudy Brittany, but to the south. He fed on the rocks of Corsica and drank the luminous air of the Midi. He accustomed his optical nerves to nature's most powerful colors.

Then he came to America, to the atmosphere of indifferent respectability which Harvard has fostered so successfully as to become "America's most representative university." He immediately felt, and felt painfully, what he talks about in the accompanying article—the feebleness of the American optical nerve. For the time being, this American atmosphere swallows him in its monotonous tolerance. The Washington Square Players, having courage and vision, were hospitable to him. But the established commercial theatre, having neither, was and

is still timid about him. Though he is one of the ablest stage decorators in America, a man whose work is so vivid and personal that in a continental country he would promptly be snapped up for uses of the theatre, he is for a time likely to be better known to the readers of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE than to the readers of the Strauss Theatre Programmes, Inc. The American stage, in spite of all its elaborate Urbanism, is still afraid of frank lyricism of color.

I am stressing Simonson's color brilliance not because it is the most important quality of his work, but merely because it is the most obvious. As a matter of fact, it was not color so much as a certain highly personal grotesquerie of design that was most notable in his early settings for the Washington Square Players in the spring of 1915. It was the sturdy pasteboard clouds of *Love of One's Neighbor*, the quaintly stodgy back-drops and proscenium decorations of *The Red Cloak*, the deliciously self-conscious pictures of *Pierre Patelin*, which seemed to mark him as the most original of all that surprising group of artists who worked at the Bandbox in the first two seasons of the Players. His color, though noisy and unashamed, was frankly orthodox. His spacing and proportioning were wholly agreeable and familiar. But his play of fancy, his feeling for burlesque, were qualities of his own, for which I cannot quite think of any parallel in all modern scene designing.

Yet it is not fair to tag him with the word "burlesque." In *The Magical City* he produced a modern set of rare beauty, perfectly adapted to its realistic business, and quite free from any touch of idiosyncrasy. Again, certain of the scenes for *The Sea Gull* revealed an easy familiarity with the spirit of realistic tragedy. His *Sganarelle* scene was a picture quite as effective in its use of "period motives" as any of our artists could have designed. And his drawings submitted at the request of the Metropolitan Opera House directors for the projected *Iphigenia in Tauris* showed a feeling for operatic amplitude and boldness that free him from any charge of preciousness. Yet the brilliantly colored setting for *The Sisters of Susannah* is probably the one most memorable to the casual theatregoer. Its prevailing red-orange tone wrenched the American optical nerve. To the layman it is "pure Simonson."

The sum of this record shows that Simonson has proved himself a mature and fully equipped artist of the stage, almost equally apt at all types of work. Though his particular originality seems to lie in the romantic and the burlesque, he would do thoroughly

appropriate and craftsmanlike work on any assignment that might be given to him. Where many amateurs of the stage would take issue with him is on his theory as to the status and purpose of stage decoration. To him, as he sets forth in his article, the setting is simply the background to the action. He quite rejects Appia's feeling that background and action should merge; he is a little scornful of Robert Jones's contention that the setting should be a moving, dramatically motivated thing, peculiarly of the theatre, and sharply distinguished in method and purpose from ordinary backgrounds. He says flatly that if the artist is a good decorator he will be a good stage decorator. The controversy is one of the permanent quarrels of the new stagecraft, and no doubt will be fought out lustily in future issues of *THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE*. I should like to observe merely that Simonson's contention flows from the very center of æsthetic feeling. To him art is a background to life. It is a very deliberate and highly refined selection. Nature is neither beautiful nor ugly; it merely contains the elements of beauty, which the artist must select and dispose in beautiful forms. Simonson's art is a clear-cut thing, having little in common with that modern tendency which seeks to make painting like music, "absolute," and communicable only in its own terms; or like dancing, dynamic and living in its own implied motion. Simonson's pictures are pictures, however bizarre, and they are meant to stay put. Now, whether a stage setting should stay put throughout a long and varying action, is a question for the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki of the theatre to fight out for themselves.

But you know just where to find Simonson. His art is an abstraction from reality, a selection and intensification, a permanent "arrangement" devised with much sweat of the brow, independent of the drama of life, and hence independent of, though appropriate to, the life of the drama on the theatre stage. It is no lack of a "sense of the theatre" which impels him to keep implied motion out of his settings. It is his whole feeling for beauty, and for life and the theatre as materials of beauty. In that, not in his lively color sense, you have the real Simonson.

He will soon, I hope, be working in the Metropolitan Opera House, which he could fill with splendid operatic stage pictures. He will, I believe, be discovered by the Broadway theatre, whereupon Broadway managers will ask, "Why have we not heard of this young man before?" If he is not, if the American theatre with truly Cantabrigian liberalism can find no place for him, he will at least be in distinguished company.

Realistic Drama and the Experimental Theatre

By WALTER PRICHARD EATON

THERE is, it seems to me, speaking as one long trained to consider the stage diversely enough to serve the public as a dramatic critic, a decided danger in the "new stage-craft," particularly as it is manifesting itself in America. I do not mean there is any danger of injury to our present stage; the new stage-craft, so far as it has reached our professional theatre, has been a distinctly beneficent influence, and it should be a source of pride to its champions that so widely popular a play as *A Successful Calamity* owed no little of its appeal to the perhaps unconsciously felt charm of its simplified settings and its pictorial rhythm.

But there is danger that the new stage-craft will not help our drama as much as it should, by the failure of its practitioners sufficiently to sympathize with a type of drama which does not give them wide scope for the imaginative, the pictorial, in stage settings and effects. This type of drama, of course, is the so-called realistic, by which I rather mean the intellectual, the drama which takes representatives of daily life, and uses them to present problems of our contemporary society. That this is a legitimate and important type of drama no one can deny; that it is a type but feebly and (in spite of shoddy imitations) but infrequently written in America, I think careful consideration will show. Therefore it follows that the pioneer theatres, the experiments, the free stages, owe our stage a debt of leadership here, no less than in the reform of stage-craft, if they are truly to carry us forward along the whole front.

And, it seems to me, in their preoccupation with the reform of stage-craft, they are a little by way of forgetting the unscenic, perhaps pedestrian, but pretty essential drama of American problems or American people.

I have no doubt that this is natural. In the first place, the leaders of the new stage-craft, in spite of the fact that they are men-of-the-theatre, are most often men of the pictorial theatre; they are "artists," in the restricted popular sense. Even Gordon Craig, I take it, has an essentially pictorial mind; he thinks in pictures rather than words. It is only human that such men turn most enthusiastically to such plays as kindle their imaginations on the most sensitive side, where they can most effectively and joyously create. In the second place, these men found our

stage comparatively overrun with plays purporting to be realistic, and on the whole about as good in quality as there seemed any immediate prospect of achieving; while, on the other hand, the production of these plays, and of all other plays, was capable of great and immediate improvement. In the one case, there was at best only a chance for slow development; in the other, opportunity for immediate betterment, even for revolution. And what young dreamer can (or should) refuse revolution!

I understand the slogan of the revolutionists, "The Theatre for the Theatre's Sake," to mean that in the playhouse we are not to look for anything extraneous to those peculiar pleasures which only the theatre can give. But I am an old enough man to remember many dramatic fashions, to have seen many styles of entertainment wax and wane, and I know that the sight of James A. Herne feeding squash pie to a child in *Shore Acres* is a peculiar pleasure which only the theatre can give; that the sound and sight of Julia Marlowe reciting

"She never told her love"

is a peculiar pleasure which only the theatre can give; that a setting by Sam Hume affords a sensation unique to the theatre; that the trial scene from *Justice* cannot deliver its message except across the footlights; that the peculiar thrill we old chaps once experienced at *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* can only be recaptured by the stage performance of some other play as socially revealing to a new age; that the truth of Clyde Fitch's surface detail belonged to the playhouse, and was shown to us by living players.

In other words, "The Theatre for the Theatre's Sake" should mean, to be quite logical, that it is the right of any dramatist to create, and any manager to produce, whatever is effective in the playhouse, and there give to the public a satisfaction or emotion more vivid than can be achieved elsewhere. The theatre has been, and is, variously used for the actor's sake, for the profiteering manager's sake, for the Great Majority's sake. To be used for its own sake, it seems to me, means to be so conducted that actors and pictures and public may all be properly proportioned parts of a Play, each functioning at its highest efficiency and economy; but not at all that there shall be any restrictions whatever on the type of play, so long as the play, whatever its kind, comes to life upon the boards. If it means that only a certain type of play is suitable for the theatre, then I, for one, part with it; and so will the public.

The experimental theatre in America is making definite headway in the reform of stage-craft. Already, for instance, Arthur Hopkins, with the indispensable aid of Robert Jones, has outmoded Belasco—no mean achievement when you consider how long “the Wizard” had been digging in. But how much progress has the experimental theatre made in developing a sense of style in American dramatists, or teaching its public to look for intellectual solidity in the work of their native writers? We are a self-conscious world now, and the time has passed when art—any art—can completely ignore the practical problems of men and women and hold its place as a vital factor in life. Indeed, one of the surest ways for the experimental theatre to win acceptance of, and confidence in, its imaginative representations is by the solid truth and force and contemporary vitality of its realistic representations. No builder can be trusted with a cathedral who cannot erect a house.

Most of our so-called realistic plays in the commercial theatre are sentimental twaddle or melodramatic farce. They do not belong to the little company of dramas which the experimental theatre can afford to know. But it will not do, it seems to me, for the experimental theatre to fly too exclusively to the arms of Dunsany, or even to think that a finer, firmer foreign realism can ever take the place of a native product. We must give the best of our native writers a chance to write their best, not only pictorially, fantastically, imaginatively, but in a serious social vein.

That is why, in spite of their mistakes, their gropings, their errors of taste, it seems to me the Washington Square Players have come through so well. “Serious” to them, to be sure, generally means ironic or satiric; but that is no fault, or, if it is, a pleasant one. At any rate, they have not lost sight of the fact that “the peculiar pleasures of the theatre” are, for the mass of people, wide in scope, and bound to include the dramas of contemporary society. They make it their task to see that such dramas are worthy the intelligence. This is a task no experimental theatre can afford to neglect, or it will miss connection with the soul of its community; and, after all, if that is missed, all is missed.



The Dance

By ISADORA DUNCAN

THE Greeks in all their painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, dance and tragedy evolved their movements from the movement of nature, as we see expressed in all representations of the Greek gods, who, being no other than the manifestations of natural forces, are presented in a pose expressing the concentration and evolution of these forces. This is why the art of the Greeks is not a national or characteristic art, but has been, and will be, the art of all humanity for all time.

The school of the ballet of to-day, vainly striving against the natural laws of gravitation or the natural will of the individual, and working in discord, in its form and movement, with the form and movement of nature, produces a sterile movement which gives no birth to future movements, but dies as it is made.

The expression of the modern school of ballet—wherein each action is an end, and no movement, pose, or rhythm is successive, or can be made to evolve succeeding action—is an expression of degeneration, of living death. All the movements of our modern ballet school are sterile movements, because they are unnatural; their purpose is to create the delusion that the law of gravitation does not exist for them.

The primary or fundamental movements of the new school of the dance must have within them the seeds from which will evolve all other movements, each in turn to give birth to others in unending sequence of still higher and greater expressions, thoughts and ideas.

This may seem a question of little importance, a question of differing opinions on the ballet and the new dance. But it is a great question. It is not only a question of true art, it is a question of race, of the development of the female sex to beauty and health, of the return to the original strength and to natural movements of woman's body. It is a question of development of perfect mothers and the birth of healthy and beautiful children. The dancing school of the future is to develop and to show the ideal form of woman. It will be, as it were, a museum of the living beauty of the period.

Man's first conception of beauty is gained from the form and symmetry of the human body. The new school of the dance should be that movement which is in harmony with, and which will develop, the highest form of the human body.

I intend to work for this dance of the future. I do not know whether I have the necessary qualities. I may have neither genius nor talent, nor temperament, but I know that I have a will; and will and energy are sometimes greater than either genius or temperament.

To express what is the most moral, healthful and beautiful in life—this is the mission of a dancer, and to this I dedicate my life.



Note on the Isadora Duncan Dancers

ONCE in a term of years one may experience a totally new enjoyment of art, may come upon a revelation of beauty so perfect that it is beyond any possibility of critical questioning. Something of this feeling of having discovered a loveliness that had been hidden before, of having added a new and rare experience to the finer pleasures of life, followed upon my attendance at a performance of the Isadora Duncan Dancers in November.

In a New York newspaper, hidden by "more important" dramatic announcements, I found a note that Isadora Duncan's pupils were offering a series of *matinée* performances at the Liberty Theatre, in conjunction with George Barrere's Little Symphony Orchestra. The group of dancers consists of the six girls whom Isadora Duncan took as children thirteen years ago, and with whom she has studied, worked and danced in all the intervening years.

When one sees them dance one knows that these girls have been trained neither in the artificial and over-conventionalized technique of modern ballet "schools," nor in the hasty methods and modes of the current "aesthetic dancing" cult. Their bodies have been developed to a sculpturesque loveliness; and their individual artistic gifts have been broadened, deepened and made expressive by constant contact with the genius of Isadora Duncan. In the work of at least three of them the flowering of art already seems perfect. Their offering is so clearly authentic, so rare and so true to the finer perceptions of beauty, that they demand praise without criticism. And one of them—the one named Anna—can be placed without hesitation among the three or four greatest living dancers.

No one can say certainly whether theirs is Greek dancing. But certainly it has the freedom of Greek sculpture, the Greek feeling for the beauty that is to be attained not in elaboration, but in surprising and expressing nature at the characteristic lovely moment. Here there are no feats of skill, agility or complicated artifice; only the rhythms of life caught and made articulate by the flowing beauty of the human body in motion. It is the perfect combination of plastic and lyric art.

New York will have further opportunity to see the dancers, and then they will go on tour in the Western and Eastern states. The reception accorded them by the public may well prove a test of American culture. Unless the Isadora Duncan Dancers are recognized as the joy-giving, beauty-creating artists they are, we must bow before the charge that art in its rarer and more spiritual forms is beyond our national capacity for appreciation. S. C.



One of the pupils of Isadora Duncan.
(Photograph by Arnold Genthe.)



Photograph of Isadora Duncan by Arnold Genthe. This picture suggests the remarkable sculpturesque beauty to be seen in the dancing of Isadora Duncan and her pupils.

Experimental: A Review of Plays Produced by the Washington Square Players

By JOSEPHINE A. MEYER

WHEN we are young and ideals belong to the future, where their details are blurred and they appear *en masse*, it is comparatively easy to march swiftly and surely toward them. The obstacles we encounter on the way serve only to ennoble our goal and make it seem the more worth while attaining. We have no time to doubt, for life never seems so short to us as when we are young. And of course, we are happy because an absorbing faith simplifies existence. But when we have come abreast our ambitions, when we can reach out and touch our ideals, and hold them aloft in our hands, it is difficult to keep on walking ahead without losing our balance. At such times we either stand still or look for further light in the distance to guide us anew. Even as we grasp our ideals they harden, solidify and die. They become at best a cult, and we who hold fast to them and worship them find ourselves the bigoted priests of a religion we have outgrown. Herein lies the danger of being successful and growing up.

When the Washington Square Players first planned a little uncommercial theatre of experiment, their concrete need of a building and a patient, sympathetic audience made these seem to be the limit of their desire. If they looked beyond, it was to feel that once equipped with these essentials, the material to experiment with would present itself. They were sure they had only to start something.

After three successful seasons, they are entering upon their fourth with their theatre and their audiences accomplished facts, and their belief in the existence of undiscovered talent (if not undiscovered genius) fully vindicated. In other words, they have realized their ambitions and caught up with their ideals. Can they go on?

A theatre like that of the Washington Square Players must grow, even though it must not grow up. It must attempt and invent; it must evolve, encourage and create. It must never really reach maturity, for that implies completion. It must strain forward to new achievements without pausing to luxuriate in the past nor even to hope too fondly for a successful future. It must continually leave the trail it has beaten clear, to seek

new ways, sometimes blind and always hazardous. As most of the pleasures of the cultured, to whom a theatre of this sort must appeal for support, is discovering in the new some affinity to the old, the typical is usually the popular. The rubber stamp is notoriously the royal road to fame in all classes. But the Players dare not stoop to the delicious safety of becoming a fad. They may grow big with gratified pride in hearing new ideas in stage settings referred to as "Washington Square Player stuff," or at having plays spoken of as "*your* kind of thing." These are tokens of arrival. But they cannot overlook the fact that arrival is arrestation unless they depart anew. That is why they often puzzle and annoy the conventional radical. They do not aim for the novel and the unexpected. They are seeking for something, the quest of which takes them through novel and unexpected places.

About the only thing the patrons of the Washington Square Players can count on is their sincere effort to produce to the best of their ability those plays they deem most worthy. The past has proven that they can make mistakes in judgment. Many worthy plays are not "good theatre," and the truth on the other side of the Pyrenees, which proved to be the lie on this, is no better illustrated than in Roberto Bracco's *Night of Snow*, that remarkable study of self-pity, so poignant to the Italian understanding, and so dull to the American that it failed even to be offensive.

There are certain universal elemental themes which are the backbone of all theatrical successes. These are love, in all its changes, sexual, parental, patriotic, idealistic, social, religious and sacrificial; money—producing the business, crook, poverty, and riches plays; and death, including murder, revenge, fear and thriller plots. Propagation, the means of livelihood and the mysterious end of life are naturally enough the basic ideas of every story told by man, and the plots built directly on these arouse the strongest interest and cause the keenest emotional reaction. The more abstract and theoretical the treatment of these themes the more they are apt to lose in what is known as "human appeal." A purely intellectual play may read well, but it doesn't "take." A play that gives an audience the opportunity to sob in concert like *The Music Master* may run for years. Ibsen was always careful to wrap his scientific theories in moving situations and in truth; it is upon the conjunction of these forces that we may hope to build the perfect play.

Meantime human appeal has been cheapened by exploitation. A sagging plot can be jacked up by Mother, who steps in to

straighten up an affair of the heart or of the police, and to command dutiful applause from an audience, a large percentage of which snubs its own mother consistently at home. Mother stuff is safe play; so is patriotism just now, and of course, self-sacrifice. For this reason intelligent criticism is apt to underestimate the real value of emotional appeal. The Washington Square Players are fully alive to its importance, and they are aware that the best play would be incomplete without it. But their endeavor is to play upon this note with reserve and dignity.

Sometimes the reserve has been too manifest, as in *Fire and Water*, a charming play on the essentially sentimental theme of the brotherhood of man, but treated so subtly and so carefully understated that its gentle quality failed to register at all. *Bushido*, one of the finest and most successful things the Players have ever done, was based on loyalty and self-sacrifice. The beauty and restraint with which it was presented ennobled it so that it is difficult indeed to trace its relationship to the maudlin jingoism that passes for patriotism in the average war play to-day.

Interior is nothing more nor less than a symphony on death. Its audiences find it unforgettable and its impressiveness doubtless is due to the fact that it works upon their feelings as well as upon their æsthetic sense. *The Magical City*, which was an experiment in modern verse on a modern topic, was another play of emotion enhanced by a poetic, rather than a realistic production, and the subdued glamor of its set. It was interesting as the investiture of a newspaper scandal with romance and loveliness. *In April* seems on the surface a play of this class treated realistically, but in this case the realism was accented to bring out the theme, which, none the less, was missed by the majority—the coldly intellectual theory of the ugly uselessness of self-sacrifice. One of the biggest surprises to the Players themselves was *Children*, which in reading seemed merely a sympathetic and clear-sighted psychological study of the Negro, but which, when acted, got over as the most harrowing bit of melodrama they ever did.

This drama of fundamental emotion might be called the drama of instinct as opposed to the drama of theory, the play with a special intellectual idea. The latter is far more difficult to do well. It was not long ago that every play was necessarily based upon sexual relationship, and the pills of criticism of life apart from sex had to be thickly coated with this "love interest" to be swallowed at all. The Washington Square Players, following the lead of their predecessors abroad, have used the one-act play to

slip over ideas swiftly and painlessly—or at least, swiftly. *The Clod*, though clothed in all the appurtenances of melodrama, had a theme so rationalistic, and so far removed from emotionalism, that the bald statement of it comes as a shock to those who have been thrilled by the performance. The theory that patriotism is, in its last analysis, self-interest, would be rejected as revolting materialism, were it less well-primed with stirring incident and did it not gratify our instinctive, primitive desire for revenge for the maltreatment of the weak. *Trifles* was another play with an idea primed with emotionalism, this time the spirit of loyalty among women.

The Poor Fool, perhaps the finest all-round production of the Players, lost out with its audiences because the intellectuality of its theme, and the unpleasantness of its message, were not well glossed over. Its incisive diatribe against the dead grey blasphemy of Puritanism was so powerful that it was almost understood, and after seeing it, comfortable people went home uneasy. *Two Blind Beggars* and *One Less Blind* failed to get its whimsically satiric message across partly because of the gruesome effectiveness of its production, which made it seem chiefly picturesque, and even more because the final stage direction, the burning of the disputed dollar unknown to any of the characters on the stage, needed the close-up of the movies, to be apparent to the audience.

The Players have wasted no time in realizing the opportunity offered by comedy for the carrying of ideas—that vehicle used with such success by Shaw. *Eugenically Speaking* and *Another Way Out* laughed their way across the footlights, as did *Plots and Playwrights*, which won the heart of the very people who make possible the long run of just such plays as it satirizes. *The Miracle of Saint Anthony* was a curious combination of cynicism and sentiment. The quaint pathos and powerful simplicity of the Saint's figure blots out the impression of the blindness of hypocrisy which is the basic idea of the play. *Overtones* was a triumph of novelty rather than idea. If its theme, which is universal to the point of being trite, had been stated "straight," it is doubtful if its success would have been so sure. *Helena's Husband*, one of their most brilliant comedy hits, was on the theme of the bored husband and the empty-headed doll-wife. Apart from its witty lines, in spite of its farcical treatment, it owed its success to its amazing plausibility and the skill with which its characters, the dead figures of ancient history, were made to live and breathe.

The eminently successful revival of *Ghosts* by the Players last spring—when for the first time Ibsen was known to draw capacity houses near Broadway—was important in that it showed that the Players have become the accepted sponsors of foreign intellectual drama. It was, in truth, difficult at one time for the Players to keep from flooding their programs with the work of foreigners, because the countries abroad where the little, independent theatre was already established, offered a fund of excellent plays of all lengths with which our own authors were unprepared to compete.

Of course the regular commercial theatres in America have been importing plays from Europe ever since the Pilgrim Fathers let them, and we have had samples from all nations before the Washington Square Players were thought of. But the commercial theatre felt the need of adaptation, which often robbed the play of all its character. The Players dared to try out the possibility of pure translation because they could do it in one-act doses. They gradually accustomed their patrons to new view-points from distant territories. *Altruism*, by Karl Ettlinger, was understood and appreciated last year far better than Andreyev's superior play on the same theme, *Love of One's Neighbor*, which had been produced in the Players' first year. Of course some allowance must be made for the increased skill and comprehension of the organization in its third year. But it is hard to think of an audience with no training at all in a Maeterlinckian drama, sitting patiently through *The Death of Tintagiles*, even though it was produced with ever so much artistic ingenuity. One never can tell how far the success of *Ghosts* was due to the fact that many found it simplicity itself after the dazzling elusiveness of Tchekhov's *The Sea Gull*, presented the year before.

Due partly to the example set by foreign plays they have produced, and partly to the important fact that their theatre is the gateway to fame if not to riches, the Players find with each successive year an increase in the number and an improvement in the quality of American plays submitted to them. Three years ago a one-act play had to shock or thrill, or else was relegated to drawing-room production by members of dramatic clubs and literary circles.

At first the Players were deluged with plays technically known as "Princess stuff,"—risky comedies and fiendish little melodramas. Though these still percolate to them, they are for the most part replaced by the play with a purpose. The first play the Players ever produced, *Licensed*, was a play of this type. It

defeated itself by having several purposes and letting them get crossed. One of the many ideas in it alone would have made it a great play; all of them together kept it from being a play at all, though it contained a situation of infinite dramatic possibilities. Not very many plays suffer from this over-richness, and most of them are so weak in plot that one idea smothers them. It is difficult for an enthusiast to realize that his message is not as necessary to his play as his play is to his message. An indictment of the cruelty and stupidity of most prison systems needs something besides sincerity and statistics to make the author produce a play like *Justice*.

It is not unusual for rejected authors of propagandist plays to declare that a theatre has no business to that title when it turns down a play that contains ideas. He is not far from the indignant playwright who reviled the Players for not proving themselves an uncommercial theatre by producing his play which was bound to be a financial failure. But this outburst of purposeful plays is salutary. Playwrights are waking to the fact that there is a market for thoughts which the demand for sure-fire bromidioms crowded out in popular play-houses. And the public, by patronizing that market, is enlarging it. Already plays of ideas, unconventionally written, are growing longer than one act, and are making their way in the world. The Washington Square Players are beginning to see the results of their sowing in the stray seeds that have fallen in the gardens of their neighbors.

This is perhaps the greatest token of their triumph. Their work is to begin things. Let actors and playwrights and artists graduate from their midst. Let them always seek out new workers and new work. Leaving behind them all they have already done, let them push on to new adventures. They may meet disaster, but they cannot really fail while they keep their spirit of experiment alive.





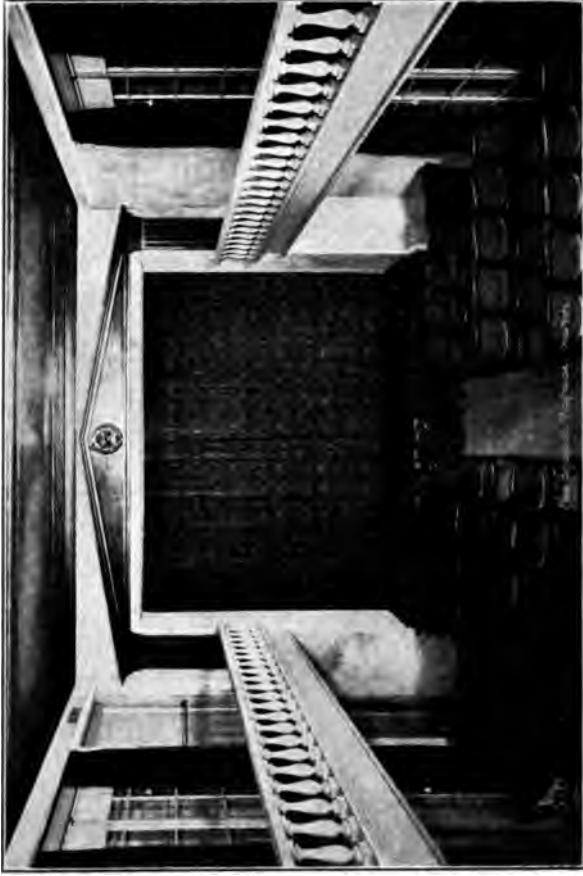
Our Changing Theatre Architecture.—As examples of the tendency toward simplification in "insurgent" theatre architecture, we present herewith four pictures of recently designed little theatres. It should be noted that in all there is a definite attempt to eliminate the sort of over-ornamentation that is common in ninety-nine out of every hundred American playhouses; that boxes have been discarded; and that decorative effect is obtained through structural line rather than applied ornament. The photograph above shows the auditorium of the Artists Guild Theatre at Saint Louis. (Laurence Ewald, Architect.)



The auditorium of the Artists Guild Theatre as seen from the stage, showing the balcony. The rear half of the main floor can be tilted by an ingenious lifting device, thus giving the spectators a clear view over the heads of those in front. The room is also used as an exhibition gallery, when theatre productions are not being held. (Laurence Ewald, Architect.)



The stage of Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, drawn by Frank Zimmerer. An example of unusual decorative effect obtained by the simplest of means. (From *Portmanteau Plays*, by courtesy of the Stewart and Kidd Company.)



Auditorium of Butler Davenport's Bramhall Playhouse in New York. A satisfying example of the tendency toward reticence in decoration and simplicity in structure.



Newest Tendencies in the Paris Theatre

By HUNTLY CARTER

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This is the third article on the wartime theatres of Europe written for THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE by Huntly Carter, the leading progressive critic in England. One appeared in our August issue and one was lost in transit—a sacrifice to the submarine or the censor. In the letter accompanying the present article Huntly Carter wrote: "I ought to tell you that working in London is exceedingly unpleasant just now. Owing to daily air raids it is impossible to concentrate on serious problems. I welcome an early return to France."

I FIND that there are so many tendencies, theatrical and æsthetic, in Paris, even at wartime, that I could easily fill a fat volume describing them. I do not mean to say that the conventionalized, commercialized, over- and undersized theatres are overflowing with the milk of human genius. They are not. If they overflow at all it is with skim milk. For the most part, they are as dull and as stupid as the commercial wit and ingenuity of man can make them. That is their great ambition, so to speak. And that is why, in the words of a London profiteering manager who has just returned from Paris, "the theatres are all doing excellent business, and he has been able to secure quite a number of plays which are suited to the English taste." Are the plays as bad as that? Perhaps the truth is that nothing can be too bad for the public at wartime, and the theatrical syndicatist knows it.

That most of the theatres in Paris are disposed to offer bad fare, ought not to be allowed to obscure the fact that the National Theatres are, as I said in an earlier article, doing a great deal to keep the best ends up. They are providing a very choice selection of old masterpieces, which, however, they are presenting in a thoroughly immoral manner. Let me say that I use the term immoral in Oscar Wilde's sense, as sheer ugliness. Perhaps it is not altogether correct to say that the acting and speech in the National Theatres are completely ugly. In the days of peace, and while there were more actors to go round, it was possible to witness acting touching the high-water mark of the Comédie Française. But nowadays it is different, and if one desires to witness the extravagantly paid doings of France's prominent professionals—among them Réjane, Guitry, LeBargy, Bernhardt, and Mounet-Sully—one must run round to the picture-palaces, of which, by the way, there are so many in Paris that the boulevards seem to be lined with nothing else. Indeed, picture-palaces are as plentiful in Paris as gin-palaces are in London.

It is only occasionally that speech and action in the National Theatres contrive to disassociate themselves from the rhetorical manner and noise of ancient actors who were brought up on the real old French traditions. But lest anyone should complain that this means the acting is not on an exact level with ugliness, let me hasten to add that the scenery and properties do their best to preserve the level. In the absence of scene-shifters and property-men, who, no doubt, are elsewhere serving their President and country, they dump themselves on the stage in a manner that suggests they regard the theatre business as a sort of wartime frolic. Thus the setting of a play, say a Molière comedy, acquires an individuality of its own for which it is difficult to find an appropriate label. I think that in America it would be called 'post-Belasco.'

Not to be unjust to the National Theatres, I suppose I ought to say that this sad state of affairs is due to the war. Of course the war has much to answer for. On the other hand, it has one or two things to its credit. For one thing, it provoked a big charity matinée at the Opera House which had a novelty worth coming to Paris to see. Imagine the fourth act of Racine's *Phèdre* decorated in the latest fashion (including a decomposed background) by Léon Bakst. And imagine Ida Rubinstein, the famous dancer, in Sarah Bernhardt's star part, and giving it a motional interpretation never dreamed of in Sarah's emotional histrionics. To persons who have arrived at a conception of drama as an absolute value, this treatment of Racine's masterpiece will offer a very pretty verification of the hypothesis that drama expresses itself first of all and with greatest intensity in dance movement. That is what I found the treatment.

Here, then, were two encouraging tendencies in the commercial theatre which I hope to see developed in the uncommercial theatre. The one was the interpretation of a significant character by a dancer. The other was the use of line and color largely evolved by the action. I shall probably be questioned if I say that the only movement to be tolerated on the stage is the dance movement, expressed by gesture, line, color and sound; and the only line, color and sound to be used are those evoked by the movement and absolutely necessary to raise it to the maximum intensity.

Or, I might put it this way: In my opinion acting comes first as an instrument of dramatic expression. Acting should make itself felt by the process of obliteration. That is to say, it should obliterate everything on the stage—actor, scenery, accessories—

till only the effect experienced by the author remains. When it is not sufficiently intense, as nowadays often is the case, when it is unable to operate alone, it should call in the aid of certain obliterating objects and agents, such as line or color—especially color-lighting.

There is, I conceive, a maximum intensity of acting, of, say, one hundred degrees. Acting which falls below this intensity needs to be supplemented; otherwise the spectator is robbed of his full effect. By full effect I mean one that converts the spectator for the time being, not into the actor or the producer, but into the author. Most productions have the effect of making me aware of the theatre and its crudities, whereas what I want is to be carried out of the theatre into that world which metaphysicians are accustomed to call Reality. I am not going to explain here how this effect is to be obtained. Some day I shall write a book about it. Meanwhile I will try to circulate the truth that the theatre stands for one thing, and one thing only. That thing is *effect*. Therefore the men of the theatre should make it a rule to take care of the dramatic effect, and the drama will take care of itself.

There are just two other instances of the crawling theatre so far forgetting its unworthiness as to admit revolutionary tendencies. If I call M. Poiret's scenery and dresses for Rip's *revue* at the Michael Theatre revolutionary, I admit that I pay the designer a handsome compliment. As some of us know, M. Poiret is a poet in the sartorial line. He is the Poiret of Parnassus, so to speak. Perhaps at this very moment he is not living up to the dressmaking ideal, for the war has diverted public attention from clothes to interiors—of more sorts than one. M. Poiret, who by the way has "gone for a soldier," tells me that the comfortable class in Paris is seeking relief from the gloom of the war in richly decorated rooms, and this leads him to prophesy a big time in store for stimulating color when the war chooses to end. Besides designing interiors he is organizing extremist picture-shows and publishing art summaries.*

Before the war M. Poiret dressed Paris in sumptuary modes. At times he discovered an ambition to perform a like office for the stage. But the fact that he has again turned his attention

* His latest publication, *Almanach des lettres et des arts* (Martine, 83 Faubourg Saint-Honoré), with its illustrations, edited by M. Raoul Dufy, and text edited by M. André Mary, is as choice as the perfume "Nuit de Chine" which it advertises.

in the latter direction need not trouble us. For, except that his "scenery" serves to reflect the color fashions and to encourage a feeling of harmony of color, it does not help the theatre in the least. And the fact that M. Poiret builds up his stage pictures on a basis of values and a total rejection of light, need not detain us. We—that is, the theatrical aristocracy of intelligence—I hope, have long deserted the narrow method of building up figures in front of a looking-glass for the broad one of encouraging them to unfold and thus clothe themselves naturally. The great thing in the theatre is to let figures grow their own raiment and decorations, just as the great thing in putting people on the land is to grant them facilities for growing their own buffaloes and eggs.

Implicit in this unfolding is a new synthesis of individual and environment, which, according to evidence, is afoot. M. Picasso is certainly taking part in directing its early steps, and so everybody soon will be, I trust. I suppose someone will ask: "What is this new synthesis? What is Picasso's particular contribution to it?" I think the easiest way to answer the question is to indicate the stages in the birth, growth and development of *Parade*. This was the new Russian ballet which M. de Diaghilew and his gifted colleagues presented at the Châtelet Theatre. The effect on conventional Paris was worse than the war. Paris was so alarmed that it was undecided whether to laugh or cry; so it did both.

This means that *Parade* is the latest thing, in point of modernity, that the Russian ballet has to offer its patrons. Likewise its authors—there are four of them, MM. Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, and Léonide Massine—are as modern as authors can be who have just emerged from a storehouse of extremist facts on poetry, music, painting, drama and dance. Of course, to anyone who is as modern as the authors, this ballet has nothing startling at all. On the other hand, it has a synthesis, which some of us have been waiting to welcome. Actually *Parade* grew out of its collaborators as logically as his plays grew out of Shakespeare. That is to say, it is a development of an effect experienced by one mind working in harmony with other minds. The cause was a movement; so was the effect. The new synthesis may therefore be defined as a union of movements designed to produce one enlightening movement. Thus its aim is to synthesize motion in symbols born of motional experience. Perhaps my meaning will be clearer if I say that the old synthesis was a union of qualities designed to produce a sensation.

To quote Sheldon Cheney, "by a synthesis of color, movement and sound, by a harmonious mingling of simple but beautiful setting, colored lighting, sinuous movement, and music or poetic words, they would quicken the faculties to a purely sensuous enjoyment." Here the aim is to synthesize motion in symbols born of æsthetic experience.

Let me trace the course of the *Parade* synthesis. The first movement begins with Jean Cocteau, the poet, who hears Erik Satie, the musician, play one of his own compositions, *Morceaux en forme de poire*. The movement is a serious one, is dimly associated with the occult meaning of three circus figures. The next movement comes from Erik Satie. So add an element of fantasy and a new simultaneous motive. The figures while parading in front of the circus are to express the entertainment inside in such a manner as to deceive the public into believing they are witnessing the entertainment itself. The synthesis of illuminating movement is to be reached in the combined unsuccessful endeavor of all the paraders, including the circus managers, to induce the public to enter. It would exhibit individuals unfolding under the compulsion of inner necessity and outer surroundings.

The third or æsthetic movement of the "simultaneity" comes from Picasso, who proceeds to mold the movements handed to him into plastic abstractions. His materials are three circus figures—Chinaman, acrobat and American girl—and two managers conceived of as voices. These are to be so expressed as to synthesize the circus entertainment and the psychological facts of the figures themselves. So out of the materials he obtains: (1) synthetic forms; (2) movement by means of these forms. In such ways he introduced four elements in a new way to the stage: (1) non-representation; (2) intensification; (3) movement; (4) motional abstraction. Thus the two voices representing the managers are converted into two figures expressing a synthesis of the objects and elements producing the voices, with a result recalling the well-known Picasso "portraits." They are indeed Greek figures masked from head to foot in the modern manner. Movement is got by contrast. To the masked figures Picasso opposes some conventional circus figures, and sets the whole vibrating by force of thrust and opposition.

The fourth movement is added by Léonide Massine, the choreographer, who is impelled by the unconventionality of Picasso's synthetic figures to invent speaking gestures and movements. As the managers have lost their voices, so to speak, they must

be made to scrape a meaning with their feet. In such ways, then, all the movements are designed to come together in a simple mass-movement, as city buildings fall together under the synthetic touch of twilight.

The general impression I received from the performance of *Parade* was that of a synthetic movement illuminating passions, emotions, desires, habits, sentiments, etc., of a number of figures, and initiating us into the truth of their vulgar greed and excessive vanity. The main defect I noticed was that Picasso's conception was æsthetic, not dramatic. Though there was a movement with unfolding tendencies, the masks on the figures did change to denote the psychological changes which the figures themselves underwent. They should and could do so by the use of properly arranged lighting, such as that used for the well-known disappearing background.

The French critics made the mistake of referring to *Parade* as "cubist." But the truth is, there was not a cube in it, neither a cube root nor a cubist author. Certainly neither Jean Cocteau nor Erik Satie is cubist. Erik Satie, like Maurice Ravel, is a gifted interpreter of the *fantaisiste* spirit in modern French music. That is how Leigh Henry aptly describes them in the only Free Review, namely *The Egoist*, which England is privileged to possess at this unhappy moment. The proper description for *Parade* is "simultaneity."

There is a great possibility of the ideas in *Parade* being developed after the war. Indeed, I think I am correct in saying that they are being developed during the war. Anyhow, there are some striking resemblances to be traced between *Parade* and a production which followed it some weeks later at the little Montmartre Theatre, in the rue de l'Orient. I admit that *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, as it was called by its distinguished author, Guillaume Apollinaire, had a character of its own, which I believe the term "sur-réaliste" is intended to describe, and yet some of us were stirred by its simultaneity and abstract symbolism. And there were members of the audience—which I fancy included every variety of Paris extremist—who asserted it was cubism, and false cubism at that. Let this be as it may, the only criticism I have to offer is that the affair was not together. The story or thesis was one thing, the scenery and costumes another.

The first was a plea for the true issue in France, namely fecundity. The second were plastic abstractions of certain emotions. By means of contrasts, abstract color, form and line, the



Study of synthetic figure, by Gino Severini.
(See explanatory note on page 43.)



Study of synthetic scene, by Gino Severini.
(See note on opposite page.)

setting produced effects differing from those produced by the dialogue. For example, some amazing effects were got by the use of such a device as a scene at Zanzibar, constructed of strips of paper with odds and ends of paper stuck on them, the whole costing, according to the decorator, M. Férat, seven francs. Then there was an ambulating kiosk similarly constructed, and an orchestra, consisting of one colored man seated up-stage, manipulating some queer instruments, including an accordion and a revolver. By this orchestra and other means an interpretation was given of the very clever music by Madame Germaine Albert-Birot.

But to do justice to the production requires an article and special illustrations, which I hope may be forthcoming later.

. NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS: A word should be added in explanation of the two illustrations. The two studies by M. Gino Severini, the Futurist leader, are intended to take the place of illustrations which I expected to receive from Picasso, who is now in Spain, and which will doubtless come sooner or later. Meanwhile Severini's illustrations will serve to indicate certain principles applied to *Parade*. The painter is content to call his present development neo-cubism, although it includes simultaneity—that is, the instantaneous expression of many consecutive movements and displacement of objects. I think he does so largely to distinguish it from false cubism, practiced by certain painters in Paris. At the same time he associates it with a new tendency in art, poetry and literature, to which he applies Remy de Gourmont's term *réalisme idéiste*.

I have not space to describe the full meaning and application of the term. Anyone who wants to know all about it should read Severini's two illuminating articles in the *Mercur de France* for February 1916, and June 1917. It seems that Remy de Gourmont declares there are two idealisms, objective and abstract. The former aims to symbolize the world in symbols, born of realistic or objective ideas. This may be said to be the aim of neo-cubism or neo-futurism. Formerly futurism set itself the problem how instantaneously to express a number of stationary objects thrown against and distorted by a moving object—for instance, a tramcar moving past a row of buildings. Neo-futurism is occupied with the problem how to extract and express the universal idea or truth-symbol underlying the collection of objects. It is this problem which is being introduced to the theatre.

The Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in America

JACQUES COPEAU has transferred his *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* from Paris to New York without concession to Broadway ideals of stage art. The auditorium of the Garrick Theatre has been reconstructed and redecorated in radically and beautifully simple fashion; the stage has been cleared of its painted backdrops, cut borders and tawdry flats, and equipped with a simple permanent plastic set, supplemented by screens, hangings and necessary properties; and the acting has been purged of the worst excesses of artificiality which characterized the French Theatre here last season.

The new theatre opened in November with a production of Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, together with a sort of impromptu review by the staff of the new playhouse. A week later a bill of one-act plays was produced, including Becque's *La Navette*, Prosper Merimée's *La Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, and Molière's *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*. If one were seriously to criticize Copeau's project this early, it would be in regard to the quality of the plays chosen, and not with his way of presenting them. One might have expected that on the two programs, with four plays shown, there would be something more lastingly worth while than these light comedies and farces. But we note from the prospectus that the productions so far given are indicative of only one side of the proposed work of the theatre—and so we reserve judgment.

In staging, Copeau's work is so much more sensible and illusion-creating than the average that generous praise is due him as a matter of course. The acting, despite occasional reversions to the French trick of frankly playing to the audience (particularly in *La Navette*), is pleasing and spontaneous. It is, moreover, good company acting rather than good star acting. The settings are unobtrusive but satisfy the eye; and in the case of *La Carrosse du Saint Sacrement* the background, made up of the permanent skeleton scene and simple grill-work and hangings, offered a notably attractive stage picture. But occasionally the director carries to extremes his plan of suppressing or eliminating scenery, as when the sprinkler system and naked construction off-stage are allowed to intrude on one's consciousness of the play's background.

In stage management, in achieving a pervading tone or distinctive method of production, Copeau was unusually successful with *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*. He rushed this through, with the players at high key throughout, and established a mood of spirited burlesque which carried along the rather crude farce triumphantly. In the other plays there was a smoothness of staging, a quietness and ease of management, which was gratifying to eye and ear.

On the whole, the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* has established itself in our midst modestly and with pleasing offerings sincerely set forth. It has shown itself as pursuing the best ideals of the new theatre: less artificial, no-star acting; tasteful but inconspicuous settings; and the making of rounded-out, evenly-balanced productions distinguished by "atmosphere" rather than virtuosity or "punch." If it has not as yet attained those ideals in their finest form, we prefer to remember that this is but the initiation of the project. We await further productions with enthusiastic interest.



Plays for Little Theatres

By STEPHEN ALLARD

(Continued from the August issue)

IN THIS continuation of the list of plays specially suited for little theatre production, a second group of one-act plays is described, with notes telling where the texts, whether published or in manuscript, can be obtained, and from whom acting rights can be secured. Most of these plays have already been tried out successfully in the little theatres of this country.

14. *The Tents of the Arabs*, by Lord Dunsany. This is the most poetic of all the Dunsany plays. It is not dramatic in the sense of presenting tense action; but when the full beauty of the poetry is brought out in the speaking, the production brings to the stage a sort of loveliness too long lost therefrom. There is opportunity in the staging for beautiful costuming and beautiful setting. The text will be found in *Plays of Gods and Men*, published by John W. Luce and Company, Boston. Acting rights can be obtained from Lord Dunsany, Castle Dunsany, County Meath, Ireland.

15. *The Stronger*, by August Strindberg. This very brief play is one of the novelties of realistic drama, there being only one speaking part. The dramatic story, more or less unpleasant, is suggested rather than acted, and the effectiveness of the whole thing depends upon the skill of the two players. The text is in the second series of Strindberg's plays, published by Scribner's. For acting rights application should be made to Alice Kauser, 1402 Broadway, New York.

16. *The Neighbors*, by Zona Gale. This homely little study of small-town life is one of the most frequently played one-act plays by an American writer. It is leisurely, if not thin, so far as dramatic action goes. But there is sufficient interest in the amusing dialogue and tenderness of feeling to carry the production. The text can be found in *Wisconsin Plays*, published by B. W. Huebsch. Acting rights can be secured from the author at Portage, Wisconsin.

17. *A Sunny Morning*, by Serafin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero. Translation by Lucretia Xavier Floyd. This bright little duologue between one-time lovers, now grown old, is a comedy of an older type, but so gracefully written that the soliloquies and asides seem to add to the quaint charm. An artificial, somewhat sentimental bit, which requires subtle acting to make it seem plausible, but an appealing thing of its kind. Manuscript and acting rights can be obtained from the Society of Hispanic Authors, Room 62, 20 Nassau Street, New York City.

18. *The Queen's Enemies*, by Lord Dunsany, is less beautiful than the best of the poetic plays by this author, but it leads up skillfully to a powerful dramatic moment. There are few plays in which the method of production counts for so much; and unless a theatre has an actress particularly suited to the exacting rôle of the queen, and a producer competent to meet the artistic and technical demands of the staging, it would be folly to attempt the play. But in exceptional hands it may be made exceptionally effective on the stage. The text appears in *Plays of Gods and Men*, published by John W.

Luce and Company, Boston. Application for producing rights should be made to the Neighborhood Playhouse, 466 Grand Street, New York City.

19. *The Twelve-Pound Look*, by J. M. Barrie. This serious, ironic play, although not in the usual "Barrie vein," is deservedly a favorite with little theatre groups. It is well-written and compact, and it pokes fun at the humorless, self-satisfied English man of affairs, even while hinting at tragedy. Published in *Half Hours* (Scribner's, New York). Production rights can be obtained from Charles Frohman, Inc., Empire Theatre, New York.

20. *The Hour-Glass*, by William Butler Yeats, is a modern morality of unusual beauty. It is somewhat undramatic, so that its production is worth while only when the full loveliness of the spoken words is brought out. The text can be found in the several editions of Yeats' plays. Production rights can be obtained from Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City.

21. *Pawns*, by Percival Wilde. Any little theatre courageous enough to attempt a play showing up the irony and injustice of war will find this tragedy of peasant life exceedingly effective. It is a sincere study of the effect of war on people who do not and cannot understand why men should want to murder one another. But it is perhaps too unprejudiced and true for production at present. Published in *The Unseen Host and Other War Plays*. For production rights the author should be addressed in care of the publishers, Little, Brown and Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston.

22. *The Dear Departed*, by Stanley Houghton. This is a sure-fire farce-comedy, and is almost too ephemeral and artificial for inclusion in any list of plays for serious theatres. But the element of satire, aimed at current hypocrisies of family life, lends a certain value to the piece. It is a satisfactory "filler"—but nothing more. The text can be found in *Five One-Act Plays*, by Stanley Houghton; published by Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City. Acting rights can be obtained from the publisher.

23. *The Intruder*, by Maurice Maeterlinck, is one of the finest examples of "the static drama," and has been produced successfully in many little theatres. The problem is the creation of a mood or atmosphere, rather than the unfolding of an action. With skillful staging and sympathetic acting the production may be a masterpiece—but the play should never be attempted by any but an experienced company. The text can be found, well translated, in several editions of Maeterlinck's collected plays. Producing rights can be obtained from the American Play Company, 33 West 42nd Street, New York.

24. *The King's Threshold*, by William Butler Yeats. This poetic drama is particularly suited for those little theatres which desire to restore poetry to the stage. It might well have been written to be the dedicatory piece of such a theatre. The play may be staged with unusual pictorial effect, and it demands poetic speaking of the verse. The text may be found in several editions of Yeats' plays. Acting rights can be obtained from Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City.

25. *Literature*, by Arthur Schnitzler. Like most of Schnitzler's plays, this is a variation on the triangle theme. It is sophisticated, amusing, at times brilliant. As usual in Schnitzler's work, there is a certain amount of underlying cynicism, and not a little urge to deep thinking under the casual dialogue and situations. Never a play for Sunday-school theatres, and only worth while for others when the actors can relish the peculiarly subtle quality of Schnitzler's dialogue and thought. The text may be found in *Comedies of Words*, translated by Pierre Loving. Acting rights may be obtained from the publishers, Stewart and Kidd Company, Cincinnati.

(To be continued)

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated review, published four times each year, in the months of December, February, May and September, by Sheldon Cheney. Editorial and business office at 220 West 42nd Street, New York City.

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Editorial Comment

The Road-Town Problem

IT cannot be repeated too often that the first problem to be met in restoring the American theatre to a dignified place concerns the so-called road-towns, and not the entertainment offered to New York audiences. Thirty years ago such cities as San Francisco, St. Louis, Indianapolis and Boston had independent producing theatres of which they could be proud. These theatres served their communities with plays, acting and staging that rivalled the best to be seen in New York playhouses. And each had individuality of its own.

Then came the syndicate, organizing its circuit, and stifling independent competition. The entire country became a dramatic waste, except as a group of New York managers saw fit to feed favored theatres with plays bearing the Broadway stamp of approval. Cities like San Francisco and Boston, once famous as producing centers, became mere stopping-points on the commercial dramatic routes.

It is not surprising that the theatre trust had its way at first. American communities take rather less interest in art than in any other commodity of life, and they surrendered their theatres to the system just as easily as they surrendered their public utilities to a different sort of monopolizing profiteer. The surprising thing is that they have stood for the condition so long without a struggle. If, as the managers once claimed, a monopoly can be the means of offering plays with better actors and staging than these cities could afford independently, the argument has lost all force in these days of second companies and curtailed travelling equipment. It is time for a change.

A primary aim of every progressive must be the early establishment of independent producing theatres, concerned primarily with art rather than profits, in every American city. Some people discern most hope in rescuing the stock theatres from their faults of hasty production and cheap imitation of commercial standards—and we grant that such experiments as George Foster Platt's season at Milwaukee lend plausibility to the idea. Others would build art theatres and put them in charge of enlightened Broadway producers like Arthur Hopkins and Winthrop Ames—which is an admirable short cut to the ideal, if one could find the theatres and then persuade these gentlemen to forsake their Broadway interests for experiment with art.

For our part, with human nature and probability in mind, we are far more optimistic about the coming of art theatres built on the foundations now being laid by a score of native little theatre groups. We believe that most can

be done for the movement by aiding the little theatres to professionalize themselves; by encouraging such between-class projects as the Greenwich Village Theatre and the Chicago Little Theatre (which must become art theatres, or revert to amateurishness—or fail entirely); and finally by putting larger subsidized playhouses into the hands of such graduates of the little theatre movement as Maurice Browne and Sam Hume—men experienced enough to handle professional companies, and broad enough to retain the amateur spirit and the artist's standpoint while building with all the sureness and smoothness of the professional stage. As these projects and these men grow, the American theatre comes measurably nearer the independent ideal.

Provincialism THE withdrawal of German works from the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House, the debarring of Kreisler from Pittsburgh and other "art centers," the storm raised about the Boston Symphony Orchestra—these are new signs that American culture is still only a veneer, that with us art is only a side-dish. The attitude of the directors of the Opera is contrary to the spirit of democracy. It is both narrow-minded and provincial. At best it is a sign of subservience to mob-prejudice; at worst it is an indication that our art destinies are in the hands of men of narrow prejudices and shallow understanding.

Art is fortunately above all questions of nationality and patriotism—a steady flame not to be pressed this way or that by chance winds of partisanship—and ultimately the judgment will not be changed by wars, dynasties or popular emotion. But the agencies of art, the machinery by which it is made intelligible to communities, have proved inadequate in the test of clear-sightedness and disinterestedness. We are deprived of certain of the world's masterpieces; our children are to be brought up in ignorance of a language which opens a treasure-house of literature. Art is distorted, is molded into such shape as will help bolster up one side of a political question.

Our opposition to that against which America is ostensibly fighting—German autocracy—is probably more deep-rooted and more bitter than that of nine-tenths of the patriots who are out to drive everything German from our midst. But we oppose all efforts to confound a country's art with the chance form of its government. German theatre architecture and German methods of staging happen to be the best in the world to-day. We should feel that we were betraying the intelligent members of our audience, and the whole movement for which we stand, if we suppressed any of the material about the German theatres which we have been collecting for several years. While thus doing our small part to give the German people such credit as they may deserve—they have enough to their discredit, God knows—we shall continue to decry every such spectacular bit of provincialism as that afforded at America's leading opera house. Only when we become broad enough to enjoy art on its merits, can we hope to become a nation in which spiritual values will transcend material ones.

Art in St. Louis UP TO the end of last season St. Louis' contribution toward the development of a progressive theatre movement had been a generous lesson in how not to do things. An analysis of the mistakes there, based on full knowledge—we have even heard the "Woof! Woof!" story—may be serviceable in helping other beginning groups to avoid certain dangers. In the first place, the producing company was made up largely of paid actors taken from the commercial theatre, under the direc-

tion of an amateur director. It should be self-evident that the sort of professional actor whom a beginning group can afford to pay will be less proficient than the best class of amateur to be found in any large city. And to place a company of professionals under untrained directors is sheer madness. In the second place, the organized artists and art-lovers of the community, who owned a theatre of their own, gave up control of their stage to an outside group, thus dividing responsibility.

A recent visit to St. Louis showed that the progressives had profited by their mistakes. The status of director and actors had been reversed. The best available artist-director, a professional worker in the new theatre, had been secured, and he was building up a company of unpaid—but by no means inexperienced—actors. The Artists Guild had regained control of its attractive playhouse, assuming management of the “season.” The system now in effect approaches that which has proved most successful among European art theatres: a controlling group of artists, art-lovers and enlightened patrons, determining the general policy, and choosing the director; a professional artist-director to whom is delegated control of all elements concerned in the staging of plays—who will conceive the mood or tempo of the production, select and train the actors, and work with his own chosen designers of setting and costume; and finally a group of actors working coöperatively and on equal terms, and under experienced direction. With this tried method of organization, the Artists Guild Theatre seems likely to achieve a season which will place it among the three or four most successful ventures of the sort in this country.

But there is a bigger constructive lesson to be learned from the situation in St. Louis. The producing theatre happens to be a project of the Artists Guild. The city has many other art organizations, to encourage painters, sculptors, musicians and others. But over and above all these, there is the Art League, a wider organization—and unique, so far as we know. This League is a sort of mothering association, aiding all the smaller groups by money and support, buying pictures for the art museum, encouraging the city-planners, bringing lecturers from distant art centers, publishing a bi-monthly record of all the arts, and generally coördinating the work of all agencies for artistic production and betterment in the city.

The potentialities of such an organization are beyond calculation. Last year the budget of \$13,000 was spent in such a way that every art felt new impetus. Among the League's activities was a dramatic competition which brought forth a remarkable amount of promising local experiment in play-writing. In this competition we see one more sign that the theatre is regaining its one-time dignified place beside painting, music, sculpture and architecture; that it is being recognized as an institution worthy of community fostering. But aside from this special interest which we find in the effect upon the theatre, we believe that the St. Louis plan is worthy of study by every art-loving community. What little energy we Americans give to the arts should not be dissipated through scattered effort. Such an association as the Art League means coöperation and coördination.

Art needs a mother—with a purse—in every city.



Why We Are Moving THE removal of this magazine's office to New York was inevitable. As the center of the progressive as well as the conservative theatre, that is the only logical place for us to be, and the change from such a comparatively isolated place as Detroit was long ago foreseen. But our departure was unexpectedly hastened.

The Society of Arts and Crafts withdrew support because certain of its officers took exception to a note on German theatre architecture which appeared in our August issue. So many similar breaks have been recorded in this country, since the declaration of war, and futilely discussed, that we need give only brief space to parading the merits of one side of the case or the other.

For our part, we had decided long ago that an art magazine was not the place for discussion of war or peace questions except as they affect art—a decision by which we shall abide. But if some chance reflection of the editor's political views does creep in, as may have happened, any sort of retraction is out of the question. And we hold ourselves free to say what we believe about the art of any nation, whether enemy or ally.

On its side, the Society of Arts and Crafts felt that this sort of editorial freedom was inconsistent with the responsibility assumed by the Society in fostering the publication. It accepted the report of the Chairman of its Theatre Committee to the effect that our August issue was objectionable, and it withdrew the support it had arranged to give to the magazine during the coming year.

The statement dictated for the newspapers by the Theatre Committee Chairman, explaining the break, is so illuminating that we cannot resist quotation. The first sentence reads: "*I am not a bigot.*" The closing sentences read: "*But there are some things which I do not discuss. I cannot discuss them—I would not know how. One of them is my country.*"

For our part we cannot reconcile these statements. We believe that there is no subject, be it religion or art or one's country, which should be made immune from the searching light of thought and reason. To our way of thinking, such immunity breeds bigotry, dry rot—and autocracy. To accept a subsidy which would bind us to such a limitation is impossible.

The incident is closed. We shall miss the pleasant association we have enjoyed at Detroit. But as we see the richness of the field in New York, we have no regrets. We shall endeavor to make a bigger and better magazine, and to express the truth as we see it.



AS THIS issue was going to press, we received a formal notice of the disbanding of the Chicago Little Theatre company. The announcement reads in part as follows: "Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Browne beg to announce the closing of the Chicago Little Theatre. They take this step in consequence, first, of the failure of approximately sixty per cent of the subscribers to the endowment fund and members of the association combined, to meet their pledges and pay their dues for the current season. . . . The books of the association have been audited, and are now open to members and subscribers for their inspection; the auditor's statement is enclosed, together with . . . a pro-rata refund on their payments. Mr. and Mrs. Browne extend their sincere gratitude to those friends who have loyally supported their unsuccessful attempt to establish an art theatre in Chicago."

With this dignified announcement there closes the most important chapter yet written in the history of the art theatre movement in this country. Mr. and Mrs. Browne will doubtless find opportunity to continue their remarkable creative work in other surroundings, and, we trust, without that financial handicap which has hampered the Chicago Little Theatre from the start. We have faith in their ideals and in their ability to realize them under fair conditions, and our best wishes will follow them wherever they may turn to take up the work anew.



The ghost scene from *Hamlet*, as produced by Max Reinhardt. An unusual example of the suppression of background, and skillful lighting.



Scene from *Til Eulenspiegel*, showing costumes and background designed by Robert Edmond Jones. (Photograph by White.)



The Theatre Arts Chronicle



The Early Season in New York

By mid-October the critics were well agreed that artistically this season had started with the poorest average for many years. By mid-November it was well established as the very worst of seasons both artistically and financially. A steady procession of plays had crossed the boards. The most distinctive thing about most of them was the swiftness of their going. The few that had more merit than mere laugh-getting lines and antics, or a Pollyanna sweetness, died within the first week or two. *The Deluge*, the best serious play of the early season, was one of the shortest-lived. Lawrence Langner's *The Family Exit*, while not remarkable as a whole, stayed long enough to prove that America has a very promising new comedy-writer. Faversham's production of Shaw's *Misalliance* departed with many a less famous work after a very brief stay.

When this out-of-town critic reached New York in November there was not enough really meritorious drama on Broadway to fill a week's evenings. The four productions running to capacity houses were *Polly with a Past*, a pleasing little pot-boiler by George Middleton and Guy Bolton; Fred Stone in a musical entertainment called *Jack o' Latern*; the oriental spectacle *Chu Chin Chow*; and the Dillingham-Ziegfeld girl-show *Miss 1917*—clearly not a group to attract the recorder of artistic progress in the theatre.

When in doubt in New York, it is well to go to see the Washington Square Players. At least they offer novelty, and they seldom produce a bill from which one cannot get some reaction beyond mere idiot laughter. In this case they offered the best dramatic fare to be found along Broadway. This first bill of the season was made up, as usual, of four one-act plays, and the average was notably good, although there was no outstanding feature. The first play, *Blind Alleys*, proved to be merely a technical *tour de force*, emotionally effective at the tense moment, but too clearly constructed to order. Fenimore Merrill's *The Avenue* is an interesting bit of mixed realism and philosophic observation on life. The dialogue is clever and amusing, and the ending leaves the audience with a sudden stimulus to thought. Eugene O'Neill's *In the Zone* is a powerful and entertaining dramatic story—clearly better than most things of the sort, because it is written sincerely and without straining after third-act "effects." Benavente's *His Widow's Husband* added its bit of enjoyment to the evening, but had only a sort of rowdy appeal where it might have had distinction and a feeling for the subtle values behind the dialogue. The scenic studio of the Players is now under the direction of Rollo Peters, so that the settings in general show distinct improvement over those of last year; and the setting for *His Widow's Husband* proved to be a rare bit of color and atmosphere. The acting showed less improvement than one might hope for. The Players still lack understanding of the poetry of speech. In general, the bill and the way it was produced marked a successful, but not a brilliant opening of the new season.

Of the early November offerings in full-length plays the most notable proved to be Florence Lincoln's *Barbara*, produced by Arthur Hopkins. While the dramatic interest was not well sustained, the play had a delicacy of feeling and poetic touch in the dialogue which, added to the originality of the story, should have saved the production from the storehouse. By way of recording other seriously worth-while offerings one must note that Grace George has opened her season at the Playhouse, but according to report has found only a fairly satisfactory rather than a very good vehicle for her excel-

lent acting; that John Drew is reviving Pinero's *The Gay Lord Quex*, and is showing how patently artificial such plays are; and that George Arliss is appearing in a vehicle built around the life of Alexander Hamilton—an exhibition which reviewers sum up as remarkably good for an historical affair.

Of novelties, that afforded by *The Land of Joy* at the Park Theatre is most interesting. Here a Spanish-American musical comedy company sets a new pace in singing and dancing, with the famous L'Argentina leading. Even the stupid thread of story and the vaudeville characters, patently added by an unintelligent American manager as concessions to current notions of what Broadway wants, fail to hide the appeal of the Spanish portions of the production. The American accretions, the press representative assures us, are being removed gradually. We have not yet seen *Chu Chin Chow*, but it is generally reported to be a mammoth spectacle, extravagantly done in the old style.

Plays patently constructed for amusement purposes only are more numerous than ever before. Those serving that end most wholesomely and joyously are: *Business Before Pleasure*, in which Potash and Perlmutter return for a third hilarious adventure; the eugenic farce, *The Very Idea*; *The Three Bears* and *The Pipes of Pan*, pleasing and conventional sentimental comedies by the constructor of *The Cinderella Man*; and the dramatization of *The Masquerader*. Among musical plays *Maytime* is generally noted as the best thing of its type that has appeared in many a month.

At the experimental and progressive playhouses there were varied and interesting offerings. The Greenwich Village Theatre opened on November 15th, an event which is noted elsewhere in this column. The Bramhall Playhouse was reviving Butler Davenport's sincere study of American life, *Keeping Up Appearances*, in which his company did some notably good naturalistic acting last season. At the Neighborhood Playhouse the Wisconsin Players had appeared at the opening of the season, and had gained little sympathy from New York critics. In November the Neighborhood Players produced Browning's *Pippa Passes* enjoyably, with Alice Lewisohn doing a remarkable bit of acting as *Pippa*.

Two or three really good serious plays, all dying young, half a dozen acceptable entertainments of the light-weight sort, a pleasing novelty or two, satisfactory but not remarkable work at the progressive and experimental playhouses—such is the summary of New York's worst season as reviewed in November. And the announcements of forthcoming plays promise but two or three possibilities of redeeming the average.

S. C.

Cincinnati's Art Theatre THE Cincinnati Players, under the direction of Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., opened their Art Theatre season on October 17th, when they presented *Candida* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* in Memorial Hall, a county building with a good auditorium, seating 650, and a very cramped and inadequate stage. Marie Baer, for three years leading lady at the Philadelphia Little Theatre, played *Candida*, and Edward Ballantine, formerly of the Washington Square Players, made a personal hit as Marchbanks.

To take advantage of this the Art Theatre altered its second bill, and gave *Anatol*—The Christmas Present, Keepsakes, An Episode, The Farewell Supper, and The Wedding Morning—on November 14th, 15th and 16th, starring Mr. Ballantine. The biggest success of the evening, however, was Miss Baer as Mimi and as Lona in the last two plays. The sets by Percy

Shostac were also very successful, especially that for *Keepsakes*. The four interiors were set one within the other, and the exterior was staged partly before the curtain, partly within the smallest interior, an arrangement that allowed celerity of shifts even on the painfully confining stage.

The Art Theatre has about 500 subscribers, at \$5 for six productions, and has sold over eighty shares of stock at \$25 a share, in addition. It pays small salaries to half a dozen people. Its policy is conservative, as little theatres go; for Cincinnati, or at least that part of Cincinnati which has furnished the bulk of its subscribers, does not seem ready for "new-art" plays, and the stage does not permit much "new" staging. But the director, Mr. S. A. Eliot, Jr., hopes gradually to liberalize the theatre, and to that end means to put on in December his adaptation of an old English Miracle, the *Coventry Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*, with which he had much success at the Indianapolis Little Theatre two years ago. Z.

Just as we are going to press the report reaches us that Mr. Eliot has severed his connection with the Cincinnati Players. The season will be continued under other direction.

The Greenwich Village Theatre THE most important dramatic event of the quarter in New York was the opening of the Greenwich Village Theatre. Judged by the first production, this new expression of the insurgent spirit is likely to take that place which many of us once hoped to see the Washington Square Players occupy—an experimental art theatre not attempting to compete with the Broadway playhouses. The director, Frank Conroy, and several of his assistants were once members of the Washington Square staff, and they bring to the new group the same merits of freshness of viewpoint, willingness to experiment, and devotion primarily to art, which have made the parent organization so much more interesting than any other organization in New York. They enjoy, moreover, freedom from that excessive rent burden under which the Washington Square Players are now laboring; and their artistic perception is a bit keener, if one may judge by current productions.

The opening bill was well balanced, with a poetic tragedy, a sophisticated Schnitzler comedy, and an effective war play offering diversified appeal. *The Festival of Bacchus*, one of Schnitzler's satiric marital comedies, was of most interest, not only for the thoughtful entertainment it afforded, but because it showed the new company as masters of quietly effective staging. The acting had distinction, particularly in the delivery of the lines; there was evident relish of the subtleties of the underlying thought; and the stage management was handled with an ease quite in tone with the rest of the performance. *Efficiency*, a war play doubtless produced with an eye to capitalizing the present emotional tension of the public, was effective—but more on account of its timeliness than for any more lasting virtue. The third play, Robert Rogers' *Behind a Watteau Picture*, as presented, seemed like a creditable but only partially successful attempt to restore poetry to the stage. It was here that the director and players betrayed their worst weakness: lack of mastery of spoken poetry. But if the poetic essence was lacking—the author was as much to blame as the actors—there was at least pictorial and romantic charm.

While none of the three settings of the program achieved a remarkable combination of beauty and appropriateness, all were pleasingly above the average; and John Wenger's scene for *Efficiency* (despite inadequate light-

ing on the first night) proved him an artist to be reckoned with in any alignment of the new stage designers in this country.

Architecturally the Greenwich Village Theatre is pleasing and adequate, but by no means ideal. The stage is better than is usual in little theatres, but somewhat cramped. The auditorium is infinitely better than the American average in both form and decoration. There are no boxes, and all seats have a good view of the stage. The decoration is restrained and chaste, but more conventional than necessary.

With its attractive playhouse, its fortunate independence of commercial considerations, and its enlightened direction—and granted reasonable improvement over its initial production—the Greenwich Village group seems destined to mark New York's nearest approach toward art theatre ideals.

S. C.

Chicago's New Playshop A NEW experimental theatre group has been formed in Chicago under the name "The Playshop Players." The membership has been drawn largely from those who formerly made up the Players' Workshop, and two of the leaders of that organization, Elisha and Helen Cook, will direct the new venture. The Little Theatre in the Fine Arts Building, made famous by Maurice Browne and his players, has been taken over by the Playshop Players, and is now called the Philistine Theatre.

The first program, in October, consisted of four plays. *The Dead Eyes*, by H. H. Ewer, was the story of a blind girl who, being made to see by the Nazarene, sees for the first time the deformity of her beloved. This part required delicate handling, and was appealing and artistically done by Karen Nielson Stevenson. *The Egg and the Hen*, a Hebrew play by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht, had unusual interest in that all the parts were taken by Hebrews. The work was done sincerely and with careful attention to details. The story was the always interesting tragedy of an immigrant child educated above her family. *Cabined*, by Florence Kiper Frank, in which Helen Cook took the important rôle, portrayed the experiences of two divorced persons alone in a log cabin in the woods. *Pierrot and the War*, by Louis Ellsworth Laffin, Jr., seemed the least attractive, possibly because the writer was fed up on Pierrot.

The Philistine Theatre programs are given nightly for two weeks each month, and are staged and costumed by the Players themselves. The sincerity of their work made the first evening very interesting, and we hope to see more of their work.

DANIEL L. QUIRK, JR.

The National Red Cross Pageant THE first performance of the widely-heralded National Red Cross Pageant took place on October 5th. The event, which marked the dedication of Rosemary Open-Air Theatre, on the estate of Roland R. Conklin at Huntington, Long Island, proved not only a huge financial and social success, but an artistic triumph as well.

The pageant was in two parts. The first, from the scenario of Joseph Lindon Smith, purported to depict some of the significant achievements of the Allied Nations. It opened with a Prologue and Dance of Invocation, followed by a Flemish, an Italian, an English, a Russian, and a French episode, and was concluded by a spectacular and smoky final entitled *The*

Triumph of War. The second half of the performance consisted of Thomas Wood Stevens' patriotic masque, *The Drawing of the Sword*.

Of the two parts of the performance, the second was by all odds the more satisfying. It was not only pictorially attractive throughout, but also distinctly dramatic. Its message of patriotic appeal was presented in a manner at once succinct and beautiful.

Many actors and actresses well known on the American stage appeared as the different characters. The Florence Fleming Noyes Dancers were seen in several dance episodes, while John Philip Sousa and his new band of enlisted men furnished martial music before and after the pageant itself.

The pageant, with almost the same cast as at Huntington, was repeated on the evenings of October 25th and 26th in the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. The scenic resources of the great playhouse were brought into play for this occasion, and did much to accentuate some of the pictorial effects. *The Drawing of the Sword* has also recently been repeated at Carnegie Hall and at the Hippodrome, New York. RICHARD SILVESTER.

The New Playhouse at Cleveland

THE Playhouse Group in Cleveland will open its new theatre with a production in December. For two years the company, which is made up of artists, musicians and others interested in the theatre arts, and which numbers 125 members, has experimented in temporary quarters, giving private performances only. These have been in marionette and shadowgraph work, as well as the usual types of production. The members have worked quietly and long to build their project on more permanent foundations than usual, and their playhouse when completed promises to be one of the most notable experimental art theatres in the country. The new stage will be open to companies playing in various languages for the local foreign colonies; and concerts and art exhibitions will be provided for. The director of the theatre is Raymond O'Neil. S. A.

THE Community Theatre of Hollywood, California, opened its new playhouse on November 5th. The actors and workers in the theatre, while contributing their services, include many professional players and artists, and the group is under the direction of Nelye Dickson, a professional director of both experience and artistic taste. The first program was as follows: *The Man on the Kerb* by Alfred Sutro, *Suppressed Desires* by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell, *The Sweetmeat Game* by Ruth Comfort Mitchell, and *Food* by William C. de Mille. All reports that have come to us agree that the organization has avoided those faults of amateurishness, social snobbery and ill-management, which usually beset the early work of such theatres, and that the first production marks the initiation of the most important community theatre project so far established in this country.

TED SHAWN, who earlier in the year established, with Ruth St. Denis, the Denishawn Dance Theatre at Los Angeles, recently conducted a "devotional dance service" at a liberal church in San Francisco. He danced the prayer, the sermon, a psalm and a hymn, and the regular pastor explained the significance of the dances to the congregation. All reports agree that the affair was an interesting experiment in relating the dance and religion—old associates too long separated. It seems more likely that the reunion will come, however, by bringing more of ritual into the dance, and not by taking the dance to the church.



Permanent setting of the Arts and Crafts Theatre at Detroit, as arranged for *A Sunny Morning*. (Designed by Sam Hume and Katherine McEwen.)

At the Little and Experimental Theatres

The Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit, under the direction of Sam Hume, opened its second season with the production on November 8th of the following one-act plays: *A Sunny Morning* from the Spanish of A. and S. Quintero, *The Doorway* by Harold Brighouse, *The Drums of Oude* by Austin Strong, and *Nettie* by George Ade. A production of *Snow White* has been arranged for December, as a special Christmas feature. Five productions of the regular subscription season will be given from January to May. Frederic McConnell has been called from the Carnegie Institute of Technology to take the position of Assistant Director.

The Players' Club of San Francisco opened the season at its Little Theatre by presenting a bill of one-act plays for two weeks, commencing September 24th. On each program four of the following plays were given: *The Fallen Star* by George Creel, *The Tents of the Arabs* by Lord Dunsany, *Big Kate* by Charles Nirdlinger, *The Farm* by Lucine Finch, a pantomime entitled *Le Pierrot Leger*, and *The Dragon's Claw* by Grant Carpenter. On November 5th the following three plays were presented. *Just Women* by Colin C. Clement, *The Tragedy of Nan* by John Masefield, and *The Belgian Baby* by Felton B. Elkins. The Musical Section of the Players' Club has announced a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* during December.

The Little Theatre Society of Indiana gave its first production of the season on November 3rd, when Thomas Wood Stevens' patriotic masque *The Drawing of the Sword* was given on a bill with three revivals from last year's programs: *Polly of Pogue's Run* by W. O. Bates, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* by W. B. Yeats, and *Pierre Patelin*.

The Ypsilanti Players, under direction of D. L. Quirk, Jr., opened the season with a production in October of *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, and *Food* by William C. de Mille. On October 14th Sam Hume talked to the members at The Players' Playhouse on "The Art Theatre."

The Chicago Little Theatre company, under direction of Maurice Browne, resumed regular productions in November, when it went on tour. After going as far West as St. Paul it returned to Chicago and went East as far as Detroit, presenting Shaw's *The Philanderer* and *Candida*, and Euripides' *Medea* in Gilbert Murray's translation. An experimental season was scheduled for Central Music Hall in Chicago, to open November 26th. As we are going to press, reports reach us that the Chicago engagement closed at the end of the first week, and that the company will disband.

The Montclair Players opened their season in November, with Clyde Fitch's *The Truth*, the first production of a full-length play so far attempted by the organization. The December program is planned to include *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* by Anatole France, and Stevenson's *Le Sire de Maletroit's Door*.

San Francisco has a new little theatre group, called the St. Francis Little Theatre Club. Two performances are given each week, with weekly change of bill. The actors are all professionals, and Arthur Maitland is director. The project is not at all a community affair, no tickets being available to the public. The productions are given in the Colonial Ballroom of the Hotel St. Francis, and the club membership list reads like a register of the city's so-

cially elect. The first three programs were as follows: (1) *The Maker of Dreams* by Oliphant Down, *The Far-Away Princess* by Sudermann, *A Game of Chess* by K. S. Goodman, and *The Playgoers* by Pinero; (2) *A Marriage Has Been Arranged* and *The Bracelet* by Alfred Sutro, and *The Girl in the Coffin* by Theodore Dreiser; (3) *Ashes of Youth* by Stella W. Herron, *The Monkey's Paw* by W. W. Jacobs, and *Barbarians* by Rita Wellman.

The Artists Guild in St. Louis, which last year gave over its theatre to the Little Playhouse Company, is to have its own producing company this season. Under the new plan the director will be Irving Pichel, who will train a group of amateur players. The first program was presented in November, as follows: *The Queen's Enemies* by Lord Dunsany, *The Constant Lover* by St. John Hankin, and *Pierre Patelin*.

Maxwell Armfield, who has become known as a painter and illustrator of remarkable originality, and Mrs. Armfield, who is better known as Constance Smedley, have established in New York their Greenleaf Theatre. They will continue the work they started in 1916 with the founding of the Greenleaf Players in London, conducting in New York a "School for community drama." Their approach to the work is based on a thorough study of folk-drama, and experience with the Cotswold Players and other organizations.

The Provincetown Players opened their New York season early in November, with the following program: *Night* by James Oppenheim, *Close the Book* by Susan Glaspell, and *The Long Voyage Home* by Eugene O'Neill. The second bill was announced as follows: *Funiculi-Funicula* by Rita Wellman, *Ile* by Eugene O'Neill, and a play by Maxwell Bodenheim. The organization will continue to make its stage a laboratory for American playwrights and designers. Its productions will occur at monthly intervals, instead of bi-weekly as heretofore.

The Players' Workshop in Chicago, which seemed in danger of going out of existence during the summer, has announced a continuation of its activities under a changed policy and with new officers. Frederick Bruegger will be director, and J. Blanding Sloan and Charles P. Larsen art directors. Productions will no longer be limited to new plays by Chicago authors. A definite attempt is being made to establish the organization as the forerunner of a Municipal Theatre. The first program, announced for December, is as follows: *Will o' the Wish* by Dorothy Halman, *Nix on the Friendship* by Frederick Bruegger, and an original ballet.

The Theatre Workshop of New York has instituted an extension plan under which it will take its productions to various centers of community life in and near New York. The first "extension base" has been established at The People's House, at 7 East 15th Street, where the first programs were given in November. The plays were as follows: *The Open Door* by Alfred Sutro, *The Shadow of the Glen* by J. M. Synge, and *Young Leonardo* by Ruel Crompton Tuttle. The Theatre Workshop will cooperate with the People's Society for Music and Drama in presenting a series of productions during the winter and spring at People's House.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn are offering two performances of dance-drama and pantomime each week at their Denishawn Dance Theatre in Los Angeles. The bills are changed every two weeks. The general art direction of the theatre has been placed in the hands of Norman-Bel Geddes, whose work in scenic design was a feature of the Los Angeles Little Theatre productions last year.

The Newly Published Plays

ANNE PEDERSDOTTER, by H. Wiers-Jenssen. This Danish play, translated by John Masefield, proves again that the Scandinavian dramatists are masters of a sort of drama that becomes sensational or merely vapid and talky in the hands of English and American playwrights. There is a bigness, an emotional sweep, an inevitability of action, which disarms the critic accustomed to judge of probability, and facility, and cleverness of dialogue. The theme is forbidding: the cold inhumanity of the early Lutherans in their persecution of "witches." But the dramatist lights up the subject with vividly human characters and striking situations. It is not a book for light reading; but it is worthy of attention from any serious reader. We Americans have no theatre big enough for such a play. It is not for the journalistic commercial stage, nor for the inexpert amateur playhouses. It is a drama to be laid aside until such time as we have an art theatre capable of expressing sincerely and effectually the serious, tragic, universal truths of life. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.00.)

THE UNSEEN HOST AND OTHER WAR PLAYS, by Percival Wilde. This volume of war sketches is a welcome relief in that it is neither violently partisan nor based on the hackneyed formulas of patriotism and heroism. It marks a distinct advance on the part of the playwright, who is slowly but surely rising from the estate of a constructor of vaudeville sketches to the ranks of thinking dramatists. The title play is perhaps the poorest in the book. Mr. Wilde is not happy in the Maeterlinckian vein; he fails to prove even a competent mastery of the unseen. But he is clever and effective in the more realistic field, and at least three of the four other plays afford available material for little-theatre production. *Pawns* is a sincere and effective tragedy dealing with the European peasant's view of war. *In the Ravine* is a lighter treatment of the relationship existing between forced enemies—an ironically amusing bit that gets away from the old-theatre formulas. *Mothers of Men* is more theatrical, but interesting and stageable. *Valkyrie* is perhaps the most original play in the book, but is not sufficiently clear-cut to seem fitted for the stage. The author occasionally reveals an inexpertness in literary touch, a lapse to "stage talk"; but the book proves that his literary talent is growing while his grasp of the sincerely dramatic becomes surer. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.25.)

GRANNY MAUMEE; THE RIDER OF DREAMS; SIMON THE CYRENIAN, by Ridgely Torrence. These three "Plays for a Negro Theatre" are now published in a single volume, following their successful production together last season by the Colored Players. Zona Gale reviewed them in our May issue far better than the editor can hope to do here. Suffice it to say that the plays are individually worth while, both dramatically and for their literary value; that they are of exceptional interest for their treatment of racial problems from the negro standpoint; and that they suggest a new development of folk drama in this country. No one interested in the newer phases of theatre art can afford to overlook the volume. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.50.)

MOTHER NATURE; PROGRESS, by Gustave Vanzype. Translated from the Belgian by Barrett H. Clark. We approached this book with two reasons for prejudice in its favor: a warm personal regard for the translator,

and the sympathetic interest aroused in everything pertaining to that country which has suffered most hideously and most unjustly in the present war. But we finished the reading with disappointment. Fortunately the preface explains that these plays are not chosen as "striking examples" of Belgian drama, but as representative of the "day-to-day theatre." Clearly both were written after the well-made play gave way to the idea-play. But the ideas are brought out talkily, and there is more than a suggestion of theatricality. The characterizations are forced, at times to the point of caricature. It is difficult to believe that either play would stand the test of production to-day. For reading purposes only, they are, perhaps, as interesting as the average translated play. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.25.)

THE PRINCE OF PARTHIA, by Thomas Godfrey. This book affords an admirable example of excellent scholarship questionably expended. *The Prince of Parthia* considered intrinsically as a play is hardly worth all the care which the editor and publishers have taken in preparation of this edition. It is an interesting but uninspired echo of Shakespearean and classic blank-verse tragedy. As an example of our beginnings in drama—it is called "the first native tragedy to be produced in an American theatre"—it is of some importance historically and symbolically. But to most of us its value will always lie in its appeal as a curiosity rather than in its dramatic merit. The volume is well-printed and well-illustrated. The exhaustive biographical and critical introduction, by Archibald Henderson, occupying almost half the book, shows remarkable devotion to the historical and critical problems involved. It is a book for university libraries rather than for the general reader. It is the best sort of historical embalming of a man of chance importance. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$2.50.)

SUPPRESSED DESIRES, by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell. This bright farce-comedy, which had previously been printed in one of the volumes of *Provincetown Plays*, now appears separately in pamphlet form. It is one of the best one-act farce-satires so far produced by the little theatre groups. It is a safe choice for any bill that needs a "light" piece to balance an otherwise heavy group of plays. (New York: Frank Shay. 35c.)

THE CYCLE OF SPRING, by Rabindranath Tagore. In reading this masque-like play by the great Indian poet, we are impressed anew by the insinuating quality of his rhythmic prose, and by the delicacy of his feeling. But the volume as a whole seems the least important of his works so far published in this country. If drama implies action in the American sense, this is indeed leisurely drama—if drama at all. It has not even the imaginative and slowly-developed effectiveness of such earlier plays as *The Post Office*. It is musical in expression, philosophically interesting, and at times lyrically beautiful; but it is not a theatre-play, and it is generally below Tagore's usual high poetic standard. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.25.)



INSTEAD of reviving *The Mask* immediately, as announced, Gordon Craig and his associates will begin publication of *The Marionette*, a small magazine. It will appear monthly, from Via dei Serragli, 108, Florence, Italy. The yearly subscription price for America will be \$2.00.

New Books About the Theatre

"NOH"; OR ACCOMPLISHMENT, by Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound. It is difficult to imagine a combination of scholarship and poetic genius more perfectly adjusted to bring out the beauties of the classic drama of Japan than that afforded by the authors of this book. From Fenollosa's conscientious transcriptions of the Noh-plays, and his notes thereon, Ezra Pound has evolved English equivalents and an introduction which preserve the soul and fragrance of the originals in a way unparalleled among former books on the subject. These lyric fragments are not for those who approach Eastern drama with preconceived notions of the limits of theatre art. They remind the thinking reader how far we have bound our Western stage to a formula of character and clash; how far we have sacrificed subtlety and lyric beauty for "action"; and how far we have travelled from that drama which was a ritual and an æsthetic experience for the spectator. Pound has purposely chosen examples which are unlike Western drama, instead of seeking out pieces that might "go" in our theatres. As an Imagist he is able to understand and re-create the peculiar flavor of the Japanese verse. His work often approximates original composition—but he sacrifices none of the Eastern loveliness to accepted formulas of dramatic technique. This is a volume to be treasured by all who regard the theatre with an eye to its wider possibilities for beauty. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.75.)

THE INSURGENT THEATRE, by Thomas H. Dickinson, is an extraordinarily clear analysis of the agencies concerned in the progressive movement in the American theatre. Although it examines the organization and aims of every important little theatre or other "reform" group, it is more than a mere catalogue of ideals or activities. It is an interpretative and inspiring record of a decade's attempts to break away from the stultifying conventions and limitations of the established playhouse. The descriptions of individual movements begin with those abortive attempts to change the commercial theatre from within; continue with the projects to salvage its wreck from without; and end with the attempts to build a new theatre irrespective of the old. We disagree with the author in his judgment of the relative values of some of the methods of reform—and particularly with his disbelief in subsidy, and his definition of "little theatre." But the book is so sane in general, so well-written, and so clearly an aid to a better understanding of what we should all be working for, that we recommend it without reservation to every student of and worker in the independent theatre. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. \$1.25.)

THE LITTLE THEATRE IN THE UNITED STATES, by Constance D'Arcy Mackay. The author of this book has gathered a remarkable amount of material, more or less accurate, about the little theatres of East and West. But unfortunately she has let her work end with mere reports, undigested and unsorted. She has acted as a news-gatherer, and not as critic or interpreter. We do not usually review books by comparison; but the simultaneous appearance of Dickinson's *The Insurgent Theatre* and this volume makes comparison inevitable. For those who wish merely a hand-book of little theatres, important as well as unimportant, Miss Mackay's book brings some weight to the balance. But every general reader and every worker in the theatre will find the other more interesting, more informative and more inspiring. Miss Mackay has set up no critical standard—one soon wearies of her indis-

criminate praise—and she fails to summarize or interpret the forces underlying the little-theatre movement. Her chapters on repertory and cost of maintenance, incidentally, betray both misunderstanding and an amateurish point of view. Altogether it is a book that may prove useful for reference on occasion, but a very poor book in those respects in which it might have been notably rich. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. \$2.00.)

THE COMMUNITY THEATRE, by Louise Burleigh. We disagree with the author of this book in regard to the best methods of building community theatres. We believe that under present limitations it is necessary to develop native art theatres first, and then to work from that basis to a wider contact with community life. And we believe that the highest art seldom comes where community *participation* is made a primary aim. But, with allowances made for difference in viewpoints, we have found the book interesting, suggestive, and at times stimulating. As long as the author sticks to her real subject, the sociological theatre, she is clear and convincing—and likely to stir renewed interest in a neglected department of dramatic activity. But when she comes to little theatres and art theatres, she seems less at home and less sure about her own conclusions. It is a book that every worker in the theatre should read in order to keep the community obligation clearly in mind. Although it fails to convey an exact conception of what the community theatre is (or should be), it is the best volume that has appeared so far in its particular field. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.50.)

THE ART THEATRE, by Sheldon Cheney. This book is an attempt to sum up the progress made in America toward the creation of a native art theatre. It treats the little theatres and other progressive organizations merely as they have contributed to the larger ideal; and it describes certain European art theatres which began as humbly as the little theatres in this country. Incidentally it affords a complete record of the first season at the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit, and includes sixteen illustrations of productions there. Since the present reviewer wrote this book, any sort of praise or criticism would be out of place. We add this brief description simply for the sake of keeping our record of new theatre books complete. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.50.)

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About the American Theatre

"A PERSON living in England in the period of Shakespeare, or in France in the period of Molière, would have considered himself cheated by the people who controlled the theatre if he had never been permitted to see a play of Shakespeare's or of Molière's; yet such an inhibition is imposed upon the public by the people who control the American theatre at the present time. . . .

"In sheer productivity of dramatic authorship of prime importance, the present age undoubtedly exceeds the period of Molière and probably exceeds the period of Shakespeare. Yet very rarely is the public of New York, and almost never is the public of any of our smaller cities, permitted to see a performance of any of the great plays of the present age. Generally speaking, the theatre-going public of America might just as well be living in a period when no great plays were being written. The fact is that, in this country, the current theatre lamentably fails to fulfill its proper function of purveying the current drama.

"The reason for this failure is that, though the drama ought to be a democratic art, the constitution of our theatre at the present time is not popular, but oligarchic. Nine-tenths of all the theatres in America are controlled by fewer than half a hundred men, and only a minority of these men are really interested in employing the theatre to purvey the current drama. The majority merely find themselves by accident in the theatre-business, and their chief object is to make as much money as they can. In consequence, they seldom produce a play which does not seem likely to run continuously in New York for at least half a season, and they rarely send to any of our lesser cities a play which has not already reaped the profits of a long run in the metropolis.

"Of course, in a city like New York, a larger public can be found for a silly or a vulgar show than for a play that requires from its audience an appreciable amount of intelligence and taste. The naked legs of sportive chorus-girls will always appeal to more people than the naked souls of Ibsen's heroines. But, in theory at least, the theatre ought to be a public-service corporation; and shall no service be performed for the mighty minority who care more about the human mind than the human members?"—CLAYTON HAMILTON, in *Problems of the Playwright*.





Model by Rollo Peters for the setting of the Wartburg scene in *Tannhäuser*. A valley, with a road and shrine in the foreground and the castle of the Wartburg at the back. The early morning scene.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Volume II

FEBRUARY, 1918

Number 2

A New Master and the Audience

By CLAIRES DANA MUMFORD

LET us admit it: any sort of person can have adventures at the theatre. Certain persons, indisputably, react with gratitude to a runway enabling them to get on friendly terms with the show-girls' slippers. Certain others accept their thrill from surgical instruments, sanitary plumbing, table cutlery, or whatnot of the paraphernalia so expensively offered by the Belasco School of Naturalist Scenic Art. It is pre-psychoanalytic to animadvert upon that sort of person's taste for that sort of theatricalization—however virtuous the insurgency that animadverts. It is equally sub-intelligent to cavil at another and important audience that feels a moral obligation to be intelligent—even in a theatre. "Oh! the specialized audience!" I hear from the press row. Yes—perhaps—but specialized only in intelligence.

In Europe, everywhere to-day there is true definition, illuminating example of the new art of the theatre. With us there is, rather, a heterogeneous mass of prattle, of critical fluencies, piled helter-skelter on and about and over the new *movement* of the theatre. I, classified under that Audience with honorable intentions, have sometimes felt that the Movement was moving in every direction at once—save towards us—the Audience—and towards the professional theatre.

And now for a bomb from Philistia! That an artist is sufficient unto himself is the precious cant of the ineffectual. It is impossible to be any sort of artist without a public. Psychology knows that art must be two halves of a whole, expression and perception; else it is nothing,—life that was still-born. Standing over our heads, as it were, the artist of the theatre must express for our half, more explicitly, more completely than in any other way of art. If the artist of the theatre lacks the capacity for unceasing reference to an audience, he falls short of great artistry, however interesting his production may be to himself and to the actors in his setting.

Several of our artist-directors do offer a schematic presentation, showing some acceptance of the new rules of the ideal unity of the art of the theatre. Yet, too often I, the Audience,

find the new art of the theatre aiming at the meretricious ideal of being merely the Very Newest—too often am I subjected to something like a merciless dislocation of the brain inflicted by detached samples of current but unrelated theatre art, labelled Acts one, two, and three.

But the other day, with Fate's chilly fingers running down my spine, in a potent last tableau, in New York, in a commercial theatre, I had an epochal realization—I had at last *seen* a play. That fecund, first inspiration of Gordon Craig, "To *see* a play," was fully, after twenty years, understood by me, the Spectator. I had seen a play of three acts and a tableau, which was a tonal sequence, as related in artistic presentation as a symphony of one theme. There had not been one of those illegitimate and ineffective capitals, italics and underscorings that hallmark too many stylizations of the Art theatres. The appeal was logical, directly to the sophisticated, asking for no allowance for any handicap of young art or new hazards. We were asked to accept none of the Little Theatre's art substitutes for dramatic sequence, nor any trace of the smuggeries and inane reportorial reproduction of the Belascoed Stage Standardization Factories.

I had fallen upon a scenic production quite past the power of any amateur, any dilettante, however professional—an achievement of the maximum of artistic unity, of persistent historical illusion, of coöperation between the artist and me—the Audience—played upon the whole gamut of color and line with definite emotional expression and inevitable conclusion.

I can think of few stage settings, which without acting could convey any persuasion of order or consequence. I believe that had I seen these three acts and final tableau unlabelled, without the Napoleonic signatures, I could have placed and dated the personages and drama in each frame.

It was a piece of pictorial history that played itself in line and mass, in color and texture—that, with no elaboration of the trivial, told you this was exactly *where* the adventurous wife of the world's one Great Adventurer played it out. No reproduction, however sensitive, however modernly motivated, could have given us this feeling of intensive history. It had to be re-creation. And it was.

Too often in the continental expression of the new art of the theatre there is a complicated abstraction passing for simplicity. The assumption that *Macbeth* can be illuminatingly acted before a purple curtain presupposes that everybody in the audience knows for himself just how Scotland in that century housed and

accoutred her noblemen; or, if they don't know, that their ignorance will in no way detract from their edification. In regard to the bravest of the Englishmen, Gordon Craig, I have often felt that, while generous in the matter of abstract loveliness, he wanted to delete the actors.

Reinhardt is, of course, a super-illusionist, assuming that everybody else is equally susceptible to illusion, if only the tricks of magic be played by a master-magician. Yet in *Sumurun* I could not have imagined anything happening until it did happen. Then, *Sumurun's* perfect children's story-book illustration showed for the magic it was.

Granville Barker, backgrounded by immense prestige, has given me keen moments, intellectual thrills, but it took all of his congregated resources to do it. Without the physical and dramatic effectiveness of a whole company of good actors, the talents of Robert Edmond Jones and Norman Wilkinson, the super-humanness of Shaw's humans—above all, without the super-presence of O. P. Heggie—I would have been interested, but not thrilled.

Here, in *Josephine*, though the play was pale, thin, almost sulkily conceived and acted, there was an inspired, a devoted attention to the emotional values of the scenes meant to be played in the frames, an acceptance of the necessity for furnishing their human habits and needs with human habitation.

Last year I learned that Rollo Peters could be spiritual, significant in mysteries of mediæval terror—that he could exactly translate Maeterlinck into terms of the theatre. No one who saw his *La Mort de Tintagiles* could doubt that he had survived the pathological insincerities of the cubist-futurist-vorticist symbolism and superseded the neo-Gordoncraigites' nursery ineptitudes in the presentation of the mystic. But I did not know that his development could show an art of clear-cut historicity, of sophistication, of immensities of perspective in the sense of futurity, of the minutest differentiation of personality in costume expression, of satisfaction in line, of courageous but exact harmony in color, of a bare, clean truth of dramatic realization.

At *Josephine* I knew when the curtain went up that Rollo Peters knew It—knew that the essential righteousness of art is technique. There was no fumbling in his approach, no glue nor daubing in his lovely veils of paint, no eccentric turning off the right line. I was instantly edified. I knew that the play, so far as the artist could direct it, would proceed in order. I began

to chant my personal creed and prophecy, *There is no Art without a Craft.*

I have suffered much at the hands of the pseudo-New-Art in theatres, big and Little. I did not let myself go. I told myself he is very young—they tell me only twenty-five . . . all youth is cocksure, dogmatic—we shall see. . . .

But I could not cherish any successful sort of apathy in that room in the Rue Chantierine. I felt the gay insouciance of Spring coming in—coming in quite à la mode to find everything inside as deliciously becoming as everything outside those two blue overskirted windows, directly in front of us, exactly, where, as windows, they ought to be—the most important things in a stage room. Not even the gloom and lead of the play could damage this careless prelude in an ivory key bordered by Spring's own pearl-gray green, fixed by the plaited blue perfection of the curtains and a green-blue carpet too good to be true anywhere out of the *Directoire*.

It was all—this ménage of the gracefully mature, coquettish bride—a new beginning, unconsidered, capricious, perhaps, but of the invariable French suitability, of a quiet, steel-engraving elegance of line and finish—a room meant to be dominated, vitalized by a presence of vivacity and hot languors, by beauty of dark ringlets sure to be accented by the high glow of an orange frock.

I wonder why this Josephine did not wear orange? Perhaps she did not want to hark back to that Mlle. de la Pagerie, who was born among orange trees, whom Beauharnais found warm-sweet and cruel-gay—who was born not anybody very much in particular, yet born to be crowned Empress of the French.

Why is it that in all of the undying dramatic art of the world there is never any tricky surprise, always, from the very beginning, this sense of doom? It is in all the Greek tragedies. It is the secret of the thrall of Maeterlinck; it is the might of the mightiest of the new Little Ones—Dunsany. It is the formula of all the immortalities. I knew that Dunsany belonged—was of them, when he gave it to us in the third line of *The Golden Doom*:—

"It is like thunder or the fall of a dynasty."

And here we had it, in Rollo Peters' scenic artistry, like the ominousness of weather—that one of the universal appeals which can nowhere miss fire—the sense of the whole, of the *outside*, which makes the placing of windows the first essential in any

dramatic art of the interior. That is why you knew that all the inquisitive Fashion of Paris was listening just outside of those delightful little windows in the petit salon of the new Madame Buonaparte. That is why you felt all France, outside, dying to peek within those elegantly caparisoned windows in a grand salon of the Tuileries in the third act — trying to see for themselves just what their own First-Consul was planning — for their own good; why Italy trembled and waited in the heat — waited for dusty, marching armies to tramp outside those splendid, reiterated arches in the Palazzo in Milan; why all the World was outside crowding up to look behind that royally hung, gloriously purple window at the end of the nave in the Notre Dame Tableau, where the new Master of Europe was crowning himself.

This was all here, in that light-hearted little room of the Rue Chantierine, that fascination of being in the secret of Fate from the very beginning. And it was all in the art of the artist-director. The proof is that I wanted the stage empty for me to people with a dark and dashing, languorous, summer-showery, tropical Josephine and a sallow, imperative, thin little Man of Destiny — the emphasis all to be thrown on the subtle, super-sensed light woman, foreboding tragedy as only the gay can achieve that intimation.

And this is the only time, save at a Wagner opera, that I can remember having wished the actors out of the picture. Gordon Craig couldn't do it, though I felt how beautifully he was trying to *make* me wish it.

As soon as the second act revealed itself I gave the artist a naive confidence. I knew that not one trick of palpable artifice would interrupt my sense of illusion. I was in the hands of a master. The second act was a high altar raised to Beauty and her dramatic handmaiden, atmospheric truth. It *was* Italy, a rich old, unsanitary civilization, a sensuous art derived from Greece, through hot and knowing Romans, an exquisite symmetry of things flowering all over an utterly pagan religion of little domesticated gods, re-named the Catholic Saints. The army and the choking dust, the very weather of Italy, were in the magnificence, the home-sick discomfort, of the sparsely furnished palazzo with its hot splendor leaping up into blue—to the flag-blue of the Mediterranean sky, arrogant with a gold sweep of stars above the restless sea-blue of the floor and the blaring trumpet call of one high red note—a curtain in a portal.

For the presentation of apposite beauty communicable to the audience by a creative faculty, owing nothing at all to reproduc-

tion, functioning as if alive in the City of Milan at the date of Napoleon's crossing the Alps, I know of nothing on our stage comparable to this second act of Rollo Peters' *Josephine*. I say it with defiance to our American incapacity to recognize or acclaim any form of new art which has not been imported. The example of the second act is stressed because in it this new master literally threw at us the proof of his forthright craft, his saturation in the essence of tradition, the exquisite encompassment by his intelligence of that complexity of organism which is the art of the theatre.

I could not help but wonder why the dynamic intensity of that second stage setting did not make the actors do the dramatic things which they never did. The most dramatic thing that happened was the entrance into that orange-sunshiny room of the black satin suit of the Austrian ambassador.

In the third stage picture formality was as implicit as beauty in the second. It was as if that etiquette which had become the stepping-stone and stumbling-block in Napoleon's climb to the top had been ordered to manifest itself in a Grand Salon—to furnish itself with Wedgewood blue walls that had caught a purple undertone, chiming in unison with the purple carpet and more than royal purple of the hangings. The classical frescoes, the patterned frieze, were no mere details of decoration; they were part of a sad grandeur which seemed to suit nobody there, to be waiting for a Greater Destiny to come in through those splendid doors, to make itself quite at home in the effulgent discomfort of that Empire furniture. As a layman—the Person in Front—I find the supreme virtue, synthesizing all of the excellences of this youngest of the new masters, his sure-footedness in scale. We are apt to think of scale as platitudinous, as the one eternal and obvious criterion in any art, the simple old fundamental—the sense of proportion. So it is—first of all. Next it is a matter of experience, often heartbreaking to the experimental artist. Joseph Urban sometimes misses. I remember certain trees were gigantic when they should have been merely trees. And I am persistently plagued because Jones' tree-boles seem to me to have grown not in a forest, but in a German Gothic cathedral. We have all been strained by grotesqueries of Bakst's over-leapings of illusion. I have yet to see a misstep in Rollo Peters' proportional artistry. But then, I am always forgetting to remember that genius is born at least two thousand years old and one hundred years ahead of time.

It was the splendid height of the curtained window of the last

tableau—perhaps only thirty feet or so in stage actuality, but as high as Notre Dame in your realization—and the extraordinary cleverness of its placement, which were the culminating gesture in this effect of right scale.

I, the Audience, was back there, in the Episode, wrought upon by needles, when the triangular shaft of light cut the high Dark of Notre Dame to show you Napoleon written all over France, to make you feel that purple beyond its traditional emblemism is the very color of pomp, that purple sown in silver is the only instrument on which triumphant ecclesiastical music can be played,—that all mysteries of Power must somewhere be set in silver and purple.

Here is where I established it for myself—that the New York Theatre has a new master, a fresh translator of life into symbols—an adult, entirely sophisticated symbolism, just as rich, just as complex, as obvious as symbols standing for life lived in the midst of artifice must be, or be—simply stultification. Which is where the psychology of the Fantastic Symbolists bumps up against the limits of suggestion in the normal human brain.

To me there is comforting implication in the fact that Rollo Peters is progressive without any poster-y impertinence, with no cubistic disturbance or distortion of fourth-dimensional space, as yet invisible to three-dimensional eyes. Not that I am skeptical about the fourth dimension or the sixty-fourth. I merely do not know any artist capable of geometrizing intelligibly in those dimensions, least of all a scenic artist. That I accept Claude Bragdon's fourth-dimensional explanation of his lovely light drama is because I long ago accepted Claude Bragdon's personal claim to a super-physical inspiration. I have faith in, though I cannot see, the new geometrical shapes in his light. I see the old forms reassembled.

Rollo Peters is poised and functioning within the demonstrable laws of vision—ahead of us, on higher ground, clearing up for himself the muddle and jumble, the collisions and explosions we are invited to accept in the name of New Art. He is merely more convinced than a lesser genius of the fundamentals of the theatre: Imitation is not art, and Realism is not art, though Reality may be.

Talent sticks the labels of its excursions all over its artistic luggage. Genius is quite sure to have no visible tags. The alacrities of his American birthright, the social initiations and edge of the Paris ateliers after the long affectionate austerity of

his childhood in Brittany—above all, the technical resource, the background of tradition, the modern angle of his years in Munich—are intrinsic in Rollo Peters' equipment.

For a long time back I have been saying: In the urban civilization of the world there are two types of intelligence—those who see that the theatre has superseded the Church as the place of ethical culture, and those who do not. To-day I am looking for another type, those who see how, inevitably, in the emergence of education from its fusty old practice, fitted only for the devitalization and mental perversion of the race, the theatre and its derivatives must everywhere replace the schoolhouse. The art of the theatre is the only art capable of giving us a concrete, organic visualization of ideals of behavior.

Easel art is rapidly passing into the curio and museum stage. It is a survival of infantilism, of a play expression of the race, so little related to our environment that we cannot, without foolishness, much longer tolerate it as of any adult importance.

The art of the theatre will be the next universally accepted expression of our artistic reaction to life.

This hope and this vision are, to-day, in the Little Theatres. The hortation of an increasingly intelligent laymanship must be against a triumphant amateurism. The psychological danger of amateurism is the shifting of accent too far over the edge of imagination. The artistic menace of amateurism is that the amateur is always amateur though he may present himself as professional for thirty years. The quality of being amateur is the quality of being second class in one's avocation. Professionalism is the quality of being a complete fit in a vocation.

Rollo Peters was born professional. It seems to me that he may be a conspicuous apostle in the coming mission of turning all of the churches into theatres. To be disillusioned or reluctant because all of his message cannot all of the time be carried past managerial and public stupidity, will be to forego his chance to accelerate the new teaching of the new age. We, the Audience, demand his confidence in the awakening and authentic intelligence of a new public.

We are beginning to know a master when we see one.





Four Drawings for *Hernani*, by Rollo Peters.
Act I: A chamber at night.



Hernani, Act II: A square before the palace at night.



Hernani, Act III: In the portrait gallery of the castle.



Hernani, Act V: On the terrace of the castle.
This series of drawings is reproduced by courtesy of the designer, Rollo Peters, and the owner, Lou Tellegen.

Our Unreasonable Theatre

By ARTHUR HOPKINS

UNDER the present system of theatrical producing in America the fate of the theatre is very largely in the hands of a comparative few — the New York producing managers. Their aims, inclinations and tastes very largely determine what shall pass as dramatic art in all the centers, large and small, where people gather for illusionment.

It is a mistake to say that the public demands what it shall have, since this presupposes some standard already fixed by the public, and up to now, so far as its taste in the theatre is concerned, the American public has not set up one requirement. A play may be without merit in writing, acting or direction — it may not contain a single thought worthy the utterance of a backward child — its humor may be the brand that pulls chairs from under unsuspecting fat men — its drama the kind that brings the wayward boy into the cottage as mother is praying for his return — its acting may be of the smile-coldly-light-a-cigarette-you're-a-villain brand — it may be false, trivial, vulgar, untrue, unreal, inept, deadly dull, duller than churches or mid-west landscapes or dead love letters — and yet be received by pleasant multitudes throughout the land as "a great show" — an appellation which conveys a bitter truth — it is a great show — a great show of the pathetic lack of discernment of the untutored majority.

I repeat that there are no standards, no requirements, no demands. The whole matter is left wholly in the hands of a few New York producers, who, upon choosing a play, choose a play that appeals to their tastes, their preference, their understanding.

Being one who clings to the belief that the theatre can be a great agency for development — that it can greatly aid in the spread of culture and breeding and the growth of sounder logic — that it can ultimately reach a place where it helps mankind to a better human understanding, to a deeper social pity and to a wider tolerance of all that is life, I am somewhat awed by the responsibility that is borne so lightly by the New York few; and I am wishing that I could hold a revival among them, and exhort them and pray for them and to them, and bring about a great redemption in the light of which we would all cast off the glamor of hits and long runs and number-eight companies and press agent's eulogies and turn our faces toward America and

say to all America: "If there is any way we can make life a little better, a little gentler, a little kinder—we will try to find the way."

For I am not one of those who believe there is no popular place in America for worthy drama. It is a taste that is cultivated, but cannot be cultivated until the people have repeated opportunities to respond to it.

And then some one asks: "Where are the good plays?" The good plays will come when good plays are produced, for there is no one who suffers more under present conditions than the author. Any potential playwright must necessarily be discouraged by the types of play that are chosen for production. In any form of art the acceptance of the spurious is inevitably a douche to the birth of merit. A real artist will not stoop to readjustment, and on the other hand he is fearful of exposing his work to the gaze of a judge who is pleased with mediocrity.

One condition is responsible for the other. The great day for the theatre will come when we decide that henceforth our intentions shall be honorable. There will be an appreciative public, authors who respond to its appreciation, and producers who bring them together.

The chief criticism of temporary producing is that it lacks either policy or design. The average production is the result of no fixed coördination. It has frequently been said of my productions, that they conveyed a certain sustained illusion that seemed not to be of the theatre. I believe this in a sense to be true, for it is the result of a definite experimental policy which I have followed vigorously, bringing it more and more to bear in each new production.

What was originally experimental has now become a fixed method, and I hope definitely to demonstrate that there is a way to insure invariably the projection of nearly all the values a play may possess.

From the very beginning I had an abhorrence of all that is generally termed theatric. It seems cheap and tawdry, the trick of the street fakir. I thought for a long time that my prejudice was personal and not well founded. But, finally, all protest and all new seeking began naturally to fall into line with a theory of direction that had slowly been evolving in my mind—the theory which, for the want of a better term, I have defined as Unconscious Projection.

Briefly, the basis of the theory is this: Complete illusion has to do entirely with the unconscious mind. Except in the case

of certain intellectual plays the theatre is wholly concerned with the unconscious mind of the audience. The conscious mind should play no part.

The problem then arises: "How can we in the theatre confine ourselves to the unconscious mind?" The hypnotist has supplied us with the answer: "Still the conscious mind." The hypnotist's first effort is to render inoperative the conscious mind of the subject. With that out of the way he can direct his commands to an undistracted unconscious and get definite reactions. The subject has no opportunity to think about it.

In the theatre we can secure a similar result by giving the audience no reason to think about it, by presenting every phase so unobtrusively, so free from confusing gesture, movement and emphasis, that all passing action seems inevitable, so that we are never challenged or consciously asked why. This whole treatment begins first with the manuscript, continues through the designing of the settings, and follows carefully every actor's movement and inflection. If, throughout, this attitude of easy flow can be maintained, the complete illusionment of the audience is inevitable.

This method entails sweeping readjustments. To begin with, author, director, scene designer and actor must become completely the servants of the play. Each must resist every temptation to score personally. Each must make himself a free, transparent medium through which the whole flows freely and without obstruction. No one at any moment can say, "Ah, this moment is mine! I shall show what can be done with it." There is no part of the play that is done for the benefit of anyone. It must all be inevitable, impersonal and untrammelled. It requires a complete surrender of selfishness. In fact, it demands of everyone the honest rigidity of the true artist, who will stoop to nothing because it is effective or conspicuous or because "it goes."

The note of unconscious projection must first be struck by the director. If he cannot get his effects in this way, he can scarcely hope that the people with him will succeed. It is always my aim to get a play completely prepared without anyone realizing just how it was done. I want the actors to be unconscious of my supervision. I want whatever direction they require to come to them without their realization. I want them to be unconscious of the movement and the "business" of the play. I want it all to grow with them so easily that when time for the first performance comes they scarcely realize that anything in particular has been done.

The first step in unselfishness must be taken by me. I must renounce at the outset all temptation to be conspicuous in direction, to issue commands, to show how well I can read a line or play a scene, or slam a door; to ridicule or get laughs at a confused actor's expense, to criticize openly. I must renounce all desire to be the boss, or the great master, or the all-knowing one.

My feeling about the birth of the play is that it gradually becomes an individuality, that it becomes a personality of which the different actors are organs or members. I do not see ten or twenty individuals moving about. I see only one thing made of ten or twenty parts that is moving. So long as it moves properly I am totally unconscious of its parts. The moment I become conscious of a part and lose the movement of the whole I know that something is wrong. This is the time to stop the play and investigate. It may be a very tiny thing—a movement at a time when all should be still—a speech when there should be silence—a pause when something should be happening—an unwarranted change of tempo, or any one of a hundred minor or major things that remove concentration from the whole.

The stripping process begins early. I eliminate all gesture that is not absolutely needed, all unnecessary inflections and intonings, the tossing of heads, the flickering of fans and kerchiefs, the tapping of feet, drumming of fingers, swinging of legs, pressing of brows, holding of hearts, curling of moustaches, stroking of beards and all the million and one tricks that have crept into the actor's bag, all of them betraying one of two things—an annoying lack of repose, or an attempt to attract attention to himself and away from the play.

The whole system of personal emphasis in the American theatre has led to the present unadvanced state of the actor. There is no greater proof of its fallacy than its failure. All are straining for personal success. If they only knew that the greatest success will come to those who can most completely submerge the personal! Theirs is essentially an art where they must serve unreservedly, and the great vacancies in the theatre are awaiting actors big enough in mind and character to surrender themselves completely, strip themselves of every conscious trick, disdaining to court approval but commanding it by the very honesty of their aims. . . .

The playwright must regard himself as the instrument, not the virtuoso. He must be a free medium, refraining from all

conscious temptation to express his opinions or to reveal his rare gifts of expression. If his opinion is honestly founded, it will come out inevitably through the conflict of characters. The characters will speak and not the playwright.

When a playwright talks, the spell is broken. The audience must be as unconscious of design on his part as it is on the part of the ideal actor. The whole thing must just happen. It is not something to be made in the window.

As to the "new" scenery, much has been said and written, and most of it beside the point. One's position in the matter is entirely determined by which mind he thinks the stage has to do with, the conscious or the unconscious.

Realistic settings are designed wholly for conscious appeal. An attempt at exact reproduction challenges the conscious mind of the audience to comparison. Unfortunately while the audience has been doing its conscious checking up, the play has been going, and going for nothing, since any form of conscious occupation must necessarily dismiss the play.

All that is detail, all that is photographic, is conscious. Every unnecessary article in a setting is a continuing, distracting gesture beckoning constantly for the attention of the audience, asking to be noticed and examined, insisting upon its right to scrutiny because it belongs. But what of the play in the meantime?

Isn't it a palpable fact that the only mission of settings is to suggest place and mood, and once that is established let the play go on? Do we want anything more than background?

The whole realistic movement was founded on selfishness—the selfish desire of the producer or scene painter to score individually, to do something so effective that it stood in front of the play and shrieked from behind it. . . .

Author, Actor, Artist, Director, all working as a harmonious unit, each supplying just the suggestion that is needed at the time it is needed—all speaking the same language, as it were—each fusing into the other so there is no telling where one begins and the other leaves off—that is what lifts performance from the one-finger exercise to the orchestrated composition.

It isn't dramatic schools we want or courses in playwriting. All these are purely surface-scraping efforts that get nowhere. What we all need is a thorough mental house-cleaning. We need some one to bring home to us clearly that ours is a profession that deals solely with the public mind. It is that which we must satisfy, and the only instrument that we can employ is our

mind—the mind of the theatre, and before we can make it effective it must be high—high in purpose, high in performance—for the low mind must fail, must destroy itself.

EDITOR'S NOTE:—The material above is part of a longer essay by Arthur Hopkins, which is to appear in book form later this month. The book's title will be *How's Your Second Act?* The publisher is the Philip Goodman Company, New York.



To Jacques Copeau

THERE are those of us who, amidst the welter and the squalor of our theatre, through the perversion of clear expression which has become common there, stubbornly hold faith with our ideal. Through the dust of the false morality and false technique of our stage a vision builds itself of a theatre of nobility, of clean beauty and of truth; a theatre where the soul of man, which is closer to him than life even, can, through a true representation of life, stand before us in its beauty and its awfulness; a theatre stripped of this false morality, unencumbered by a false technique. To these believers comes occasionally a constructive promise, an encouragement.

In the last four years in New York I can remember two magnificent symphonic productions in which the action and the actors were fused in a fusion incredibly suggestive of life: Emanuel Reicher's presentation of *The Weavers*, and now Jacques Copeau's production of *Les Freres Karamasov*.

Life is a flickering in a storm, a ring of comfort in a terrible universe: terrible with beauty and with mystery. Life is a suffering and a song, shared by all men. There can be no false optimism as there can be no deep skepticism with him who lives close to life.

The Weavers is the world of suffering. *Les Freres Karamasov* is a group of men symbolic of this world, alternately tortured and exalted. There is the magnificence of stark truth in it.

Jacques Copeau has realized fully the sense of life in this production. It is as if all facets of existence were stripped of lies and deceit; the naked body of life quivers before us in its beauty and its pity. The fusion of the actors into a symbolic group is accomplished without effort; passion whips them like a master torturing his slaves, hate burns them and love comes to them all, differently. There is something beautifully common here. . . .

Those who are skeptical as to the true value of what this French Theatre has brought to us—something for the American Theatre to feel and profit by: a sincerity, a mastery of a true technique—will forget a certain artificiality in the plays produced earlier in the season. *Les Freres Karamasov* burns with sincerity. Through the passion of this sincerity, out of the fusion of the individual actors, Life rises before us.

Here is the epitome of art: not a comfort or a shallow myth, but the intensification of life itself. The faults in the production, in the play, of the separate actors, become as the common faults of the World of Men.

To Jacques Copeau and to his confreres all thanks. He has reassured us; has given us strength to labor and to struggle for a Theatre which will become stronger than the Church, in that it has league with Life. ROLLO PETERS.

Comment on Current Plays

IN PLANNING a department which would pass in review all new plays coming to the New York stage, we intended to provide for our readers one more check on the development of a better theatre in America. After enduring more than thirty New York productions in three months, the Editor confesses that he no longer has faith that a record of such offerings can be said largely to concern the real art of the theatre. In future issues we shall continue to list all professional productions (exclusive of musical comedies)—but a new classification will be attempted which will separate the wheat from the chaff more effectively than does the grouping which follows.

It is clear that the quarter-year just past has brought forth nothing to change the verdict published in our December issue: that this is the worst season artistically that the New York theatres have known for years. Of nearly thirty productions which have appeared on the commercial theatre stages in the three months since mid-November, only four can with any justice claim consideration as examples of serious theatre art. And, excepting the revival, no one of these four could stand comparison with the best offerings of last season—say with *The Yellow Jacket*, *Pierrot the Prodigal*, *A Kiss for Cinderella*, and *Getting Married*, all of which were on the boards at this time last winter.

We regard the following as the best four productions:

MADAME SAND, written by Philip Moeller and produced by Mrs. Fiske at the Criterion Theatre in November, is artificial comedy of a type too seldom seen in American theatres. Despite a somewhat colorless interpretation by a cast that should do better, and in spite of the episodic nature of the action, the production affords some brilliant scenes, a remarkable character-study, and much fun of a satiric sort. If the whole thing is superficial in general design and philosophy, it at least has a brilliant surface-play of wit and epigram—and that is a blessed relief in these dull days.

THE GIPSY TRAIL by Robert Housum, at the Plymouth Theatre, is a better-than-ordinary romantic comedy. The plot is not original, telling how a romance-loving youth wins a beautiful girl from the conventional ninny she was about to marry. But there is so much incidental fun that the stock sentimentalities do not cloy. In addition there is enough of philosophical observation and of incidental poetry to lift the piece out of the list of merely diverting comedies. The settings are beautifully simple, and the stage management again proves Arthur Hopkins a master of the details of staging.

WHY MARRY? is one of the best American comedies of recent years. Jesse Lynch Williams endowed the play with both the virtues and the faults which a literary man usually brings to a stage-piece. The faults: lack of unified action, and a tendency to discussion rather than drama. The virtues:



Scene from the last act of *Madame Sand*, showing Mrs. Fiske in the title role. The setting designed by Rollo Peters. (Photograph by Hagelstair Bros.)

freshness of viewpoint, some real ideas about life and marriage, vivid characterization and well-written dialogue. It is difficult to believe that the author introduced the vaudeville gags which cheapen the piece—particularly the “tutti-frutti” which comes with annoying repetition—and we suppose that these were added by “experts” to “buck up the show.” The producers gave the play a remarkably able cast in general, but curiously miscast some of the women characters. On the whole, an entertainment uncommonly good, and leaving a real stimulus to thought. Produced at the Astor Theatre in December.

THE MASTER, by Hermann Bahr, was revived by Arnold Daly at the Hudson Theatre in February. Except for some of Shaw's plays, no finer example of the “drama of thought”—so popular in the best European theatres, and so seldom seen in America—has come to a New York stage. The production was adequate in all its details. Excellent entertainment for people who are more interested in new ideas about life, and its old problems, than in pretty faces, sentimental twaddle, and thrills.

As always when classification is attempted, certain plays fall between divisions. All of the following have some distant claim to be considered as contributing to the dramatic art of the season, either historically or as technical or dramatic novelties. But not one is a thoroughly good production in its particular field:

LORD AND LADY ALGY, a creaky “aristocratic” comedy by R. C. Carton, produced at the Broadhurst Theatre in December, served to exhibit comedy-writing of the nineteenth-century model in all its artificiality, glamour and lifelessness. Historically the event was of some interest, and it served to bring William Faversham, Maclyn Arbuckle, Maxine Elliott and Irene Fenwick into one cast. But really the comic lines and situations so easily slip over into farce, some of the characterizations are so crude, and the whole is so clearly constructed according to formula, that one cannot still take the play seriously. Mr. Faversham gave the best possible frame to an out-of-date picture.

THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS. There are many examples of miscasting to be seen in New York theatres each season, but the prize must be awarded to the coldly virtuous and statuesquely beautiful Ethel Barrymore in the rôle of Camille. Aside from this temperamental misfit in the chief part, it was a notable revival of Dumas' classical example of sentimental tragedy—richly staged, extraordinarily well-played in general, and theatrically effective. But it is unfortunate that Miss Barrymore should open her repertory season with such a relic of the past glories of the theatre.

YES OR NO is one of the technical novelties of the season, and it tells a story of more than usual interest. The action is occasionally melodramatic, and the comic relief is none too subtly inserted. But there is a certain freshness of treatment, and the unique working out of two plots side by side has something of the absorbing interest of a double-barreled detective story. The play is by Arthur Goodrich. Produced at the 48th Street Theatre in December.

JOSEPHINE, which Arnold Daly offered briefly at the Knickerbocker Theatre in January, exhibited a few brilliant spots, but was dramatically dull as a whole. The adaptation (from Hermann Bahr) was a disfiguration of

what might have been a brilliant historical satire. Arnold Daly's impersonation of Napoleon was interesting enough, but Virginia Harned was somewhat insipid as Josephine. Once the play rose to the level of intriguing satire; and the settings were fine. But the drama was lacking.

In our third division, which follows, are grouped all other offerings of the commercial theatres. These are plays that make no pretension to any virtue other than providing a pleasant evening's pastime—or, if they make more serious pretension, fail to live up to it. They range from a few exceedingly diverting and amusing plays to many dull, vulgar and distressing ones.

BILLETED. An agreeable wartime comedy, with an unusual number of good lines, but entirely conventional and obvious in plot. Well acted by Margaret Anglin and a capable company. At the Playhouse in December.

THE LITTLE TEACHER, a sentimental comedy by Harry James Smith, offers more than the usual measure of laughter and tears, and must be accounted one of the most entertaining plays of the season. The plot is a ready-made affair, and much irrelevant wartime sentiment is added to bolster up the last act. Mary Ryan, despite lack of repose and a good voice irritatingly misused, is generally charming in the leading rôle.

THE KING. The best of vulgar comedy, providing excellent entertainment for those who are not too squeamish about how they get their laughs. It is French farce Cohanized—which means that it is sophisticated, risqué, and even coarse, but undeniably funny. At the Cohan Theatre in November.

SEVENTEEN, an adaptation of Booth Tarkington's popular book, offers an amusing study of adolescent love and small-town family life, but is somewhat thin dramatically. Such a slight piece needs the distinction which, for example, Arthur Hopkins bestowed on the production of *Good Gracious, Annabelle*. In the present undistinguished production it is merely passably entertaining. At the Booth Theatre in January.

GENERAL POST. A somewhat thin wartime comedy, but with many amusing lines and a telling situation or two. A pleasant vehicle for the appealing acting of Tom Wise and William Courtenay. Written by J. E. Harold Terry and produced at the Gaiety Theatre in December.

THE MADONNA OF THE FUTURE, by Alan Dale, is an amusing but shallow attempt at Shavian comedy. There is an evident overstraining to be shocking, the thought element is badly diluted, and there are many lapses from the smart comedy tone to commonplace jesting and vulgarity. The whole passably entertaining in a flippant, sophisticated, night-life way. At the Broadhurst Theatre in January.

THE COPPERHEAD,* by Augustus Thomas, is a timely patriotic play, dull in spots and seldom up to the author's best level, but sufficiently interesting in a poor season. Well produced, and with Lionel Barrymore acting at his best. At the Shubert Theatre in February.

*From this point on, the plays listed have not all been seen by the Editor personally. In such cases the notices are based on the opinions of Contributing Editors or on the reviews of the most authoritative critics—chiefly Louis Sherwin of *The Globe*, and Metcalfe of *Life*.

THE HERITAGE, by Eugene Walter, is true to the author's well-known formula for manufacturing refined melodrama. The typical tense action and thrilling moments are there, but the whole is less convincing than some of Walter's earlier plays. At the Playhouse in January.

SUCCESS. Summed up by the *Evening Post's* critic as "A rather effective drama of stage life, though a very theatrical one." Well acted and well produced but stogy. At the Harris Theatre in January.

BLIND YOUTH is a conventional vehicle manufactured by Lou Tellegen and Willard Mack for the former. Unimportant, but interesting to Tellegen's wide but limited following. At the 39th Street Theatre in December.

ART AND OPPORTUNITY, a comedy by Harold Chapin, with large faults in the dramatic structure, but attractively fresh in dialogue and characterization. Rather too subtle for wide acceptance. At the Knickerbocker Theatre in November.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WIFE. Another comedy by Frederick and Fanny Hatton, of the usual Hatton sort. Vulgar and false, but amusing. At the Hudson Theatre in January.

HAPPINESS. Typical Hartley-Manners-Laurette-Taylor sweet stuff — not unattractive, but too sentimental and conventional for serious consideration. At the Criterion Theatre in December.

PARLOR, BEDROOM AND BATH. Sufficiently condemned by its own modest advertisements as "a fresh, flippant, farcical frolic." At the Republic Theatre in December.

HER COUNTRY. Poorly produced and poorly acted propaganda play. Said to have been successful in London, but evidently badly cheapened for American consumption. At the Punch and Judy Theatre in February.

GOOD MORNING, ROSAMOND. A comedy dealing with the worn theme of a woman's honor cast in shadow by a charitable but innocent act, with the usual ultimate clearing. Even an added happy-marriage ending failed to make up for lack of humor and other deficiencies. At the 48th Street Theatre in December.

SEVEN DAYS' LEAVE. A war melodrama with the usual thrilling stunts, obvious sentiments and lack of art. At the Park Theatre in January.

A CURE FOR CURABLES. Harmless amusement of the sort that is guaranteed not to tax anyone's brain. A plotless, purposeless background designed to show off William Hodge's amiable talents. At the 39th Street Theatre in February.

SICK-A-BED. A farce of a somewhat far-fetched sort, but sufficiently amusing in general. At the Gaiety Theatre in February.

If there is one direction in which the season has not been a failure, it is in the work of the insurgent theatres. There have been no really brilliant achievements, and many disappointing productions; but in a bad season their offerings have been well-comely above the commercial average. They indicate — as we have noted before — that the real progress of the American theatre is being made outside the "regular" playhouses. The following is a summary of their activities during the quarter:

THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS this year have not always found as good plays as in the past, but even under that handicap they have shown a notable advance over their earlier seasons. Aside from the greater sureness

and finish which one would expect in a maturing organization, they have made an exceptional gain artistically in adding Rollo Peters to the producing staff. Where the staging has been exceedingly uneven in other days, there is now the certainty that productions at the Comedy will be mounted according to a standard far above the average, with an occasional stage picture of extraordinary merit. The Players touched one of the high-water marks of their career in the production of Theodore Dreiser's *The Girl in the Coffin* on their second bill. The play is a remarkably fine bit of realistic drama, and there were both sincerity and sympathetic understanding in the acting and staging. The same bill included a clownish interpretation of Zona Gale's *Neighbors*, a well-acted and thoroughly interesting comedy, *The Critic's Comedy* by Samuel Kaplan, and a foolish burlesque called *Yum Chapab*. The third bill (an all-comedy program too light for a theatre with serious pretensions) brought forth two very entertaining numbers, the popular and excellent farce-satire *Suppressed Desires*, and a "melodramatic comedy" called *The Sandbar Queen*, by George Cronyn. Philip Moeller's *Pokey* and Frank Dare's *Habit* added little to the evening's enjoyment. In February the Players essayed their first full-length play of the season, a comedy by Miles Malleon, entitled *Youth*. This proved to be a mildly interesting but never absorbing treatment of the marriage problem—refreshing in viewpoint and sincerely written, but technically loose. This record of three bills shows but one really brilliant spot; but in general—in staging, in acting, and particularly in coordination of the elements of production—the Players have been making this their most successful season.

THE GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE has produced but one play in the quarter, a notable realistic drama from the Danish of Bergstrom. In *Karen*, however, Frank Conroy's players and staff do not completely fulfill the promise of their earlier bill of one-act plays. The acting and staging failed somewhat of that unity and distinction which should characterize art-theatre production. The title rôle was given to Fania Marinoff, who is temperamentally unfitted for the part, and the other acting ranged from the quietly effective work of Mr. Conroy to the painful antics of a cub-actor. The production shows the Greenwich Village group on trial rather than achieving an unquestionable success.

MARGARET ANGLIN has provided the most important special event in the "regular" theatres—it seems that any art event is special in the commercial calendar—in her productions of *Electra* and *Medea* at Carnegie Hall. These productions were large in conception, and were carried out with a majestic sweep entirely in keeping with the spirit of the Greek originals. Miss Anglin again proved the versatility of her own talents and her broad interest in the best dramatic art of all ages. If the shortcomings of the presentation serve to remind some of us how far from the ideal the best American work still is, we still must give Miss Anglin credit and praise for striking infinitely higher than the great mass of her associates of the professional theatre. We shall publish a longer critical essay about her productions in our May issue.

Other experimental or special productions which deserve mention are: *The Shakespeare Playhouse* special matinées at the Cort Theatre, under the direction of Frank McEntee, which showed Edith Wynne Matthison in a number of favorite rôles, with a capable supporting cast; the presentation of *The Silent Assertion* at the Bramhall Playhouse, a step backward for Butler Davenport's experimental theatre group; the production, in a somewhat inadequate way, of Björnson's *The Gauntlet* by the Theatre Workshop; the first appearance of *Tony Sarg's Marionettes* at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and the production of a Noh-play, *Tamura*, at the same theatre; Stuart Walker's production of *The Book of Job* (reviewed on page 109); and a notable series of productions at the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier*. Of the Shakespeare Playhouse and French Theatre series we shall present longer reviews at the end of the season.

A Note on Poetic Drama

By JAMES OPPENHEIM

THE revival of poetic drama may be looked for, not in some stupendous spectacle or imitation Shakespeare, with blank verse and princes of the blood, but rather in humble simplicity and on the boards of some amateur Little Theatre. The modern voice is one of sincerity, directness and intimacy, and so prose drama has been in the ascendency.

Verbal music has practically ceased on the stage, because the poet, with his diluted Shakespearean blank verse, has had to match the archaic flavor of his song with archaic themes, archaic characters and manners, and produced something stilted and out of key with our epoch. His place has been preëmpted by the musician: instead of a new Shakespeare we have a Wagner. For, in the very period when poetry was at a standstill, and poets of genius were merely elaborating Elizabethan or Renaissance song, song of pure sound began a great evolution of its own and became a flexible, variable instrument of the utmost delicacy and poignance.

It was not until recently that verbal song began to learn its new possibilities from music, and there arose that use of verbal rhythms and sounds loosely called "free verse," *vers libre*, poly-rhythmic poetry, etc. A new instrument is in the hands of the poets, and its possibilities have hardly been touched.

It is my belief that poetry is not primarily concerned with picture-making, "imagism," story-telling, character-analysis; fundamentally, poetry is nothing less than *verbal music*. This ought to be self-evident. The material of poetry is *words*, just as the material of painting is *color*. Words are sounds, meant for the tongue and ear — not for the eye. Before the child or savage writes or draws, he sounds his word-calls, and these sounds, associated with our earliest racial and personal memories, vibrate with rich meanings and emotions, and stir us to the depths. Verbal music is merely that arrangement of word-sounds which reaches us most poignantly. It is undoubtedly out of word-sounds that music itself is evolved, so that one might almost call music the abstract spirit of words, evolved, of course, and elaborated beyond recognition, but making the same fundamental appeal.

If poetry then is verbal music, the concern of the poet must be primarily with rhythm, tune, word-coloration and composition;

and the effect he produces must be primarily for the ear. Vachel Lindsay is of course right in his contention that poetry should be rendered aloud, so that we may actually hear it as we hear music. It is not to be thought, however, that this means that poetry is to be sound alone. In this art, as in every other, it is the complexity of the structure—color for painting, sound for music and poetry—that determines the greatness of the product. One may produce a poem which has thought, vision, images, drama, story; and yet all these latter things may be expressed, and even expressed in one composition, and still not be poetry. Prose offers the opportunity for drama, story-telling, vision, philosophy, etc. It is only when these things are so organized as to produce *verbal music* that we have poetry.

In short, we may say that of all the arts poetry and music are most closely allied: stem, in fact, from the same principle. If this is true, then it is apparent that the poet has much to learn from the musician. Why is it that opera flourishes, that concerts are an established institution, but that the poetic drama is practically defunct, and poetry is rarely rendered in public? I think the answer will be found in an analysis of any great music-drama, as, for instance, *Tristan and Isolde*.

In *Tristan and Isolde* the music itself, whether sung or played by the orchestra, is the main thing. Everything else is subordinated: the action is so slow, the pictures so static, the acting so formal, that if the music were omitted, the whole performance would be unutterably dull and tedious. It is in the music, however, that the experience is found, and this makes the subjective drama in the listener and spectator so rich that he is content to wait for the punctuations and flourishes of action. In the last act the dying of Tristan is for a long time nothing externally on the stage, but the music unrolls the inner drama of the characters, and so action is hardly necessary.

But when poetic drama is rendered on the modern stage, the cry is that "the play's the thing," and everything else is subordinated to the dramatic action. Even in Shakespearean plays, passages are omitted or cut, the poetry is rendered, if possible, in a conversational, dramatic way, the way of prose, and all the emphasis is put on plot and situation. In short, poetry is used, at best, as accessory.

Herein lies the mistake. The poetry's the thing, in poetic drama,—not the play. The poet here must learn from the musician. It is my belief that revival of poetic drama will result from the writing of plays in which the essential instrument is the

poetry, and the audience is called upon to enjoy the verbal music as in opera they enjoy absolute music. It will be a matter of training and education as much as anything. There is no reason why an audience should not enjoy a concert of poetry as well as a concert of music.

In order, however, to achieve such a result, we must have poetry as rich and modern as music has become. It must have the variety, splendor, intimacy and delicacy of a symphony or a music-drama. We must have a poetic drama in which the audience listens even more than it looks: in which the drama becomes largely subjective, and the enjoyment lies primarily in the magical unrolling of experience through the poetry. The action, the stage-pictures, become then accessories, enriching, making more vivid, externalizing the subjective drama.

A little dramatic poem of mine, *Night*, is, I think, a tentative step in such a direction. Fortunately it was rendered by the Provincetown Players in New York, on November 2, 1917, and there was an opportunity to test the form with an actual audience. Everything was subdued to the poem. The scene was merely a concave sheet, flooded from the back by violet light. A mound before this suggested the hilltop against the night-sky. The rest was shadow. The characters on this mound were merely silhouettes against the sky, and their few movements suggested something liquid and flowing. Out of this arose the verbal music, rendered with full value for every word, every rhythm, every tune and melody. The result was very moving, very poignant. There is no reason why more elaborate work should not be given, and why there should not be an evolution of the form until it becomes full-fledged poetic drama: as rich as the Wagnerian *Ring*, and far more dramatic, picturesque and revealing than this poem of mine.

Then, as opera needs singers, so will poetic drama need gifted voices which will of themselves bring joy and enchantment. We shall need audiences who are willing to discover the beauty of the song of words, and we shall need poets who understand dramatic poetry, and whose work is composed with that inner growth, change and contrast which are, after all, the very secret of drama.



The Greenleaf Theatre*

By CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

THE difference between the Greenleaf Theatre and all the other little theatres or repertory theatres that we have come across, as yet, is fundamental. The latter are experimenting, while attempting to improve the lines of the modern theatre, with a stage possessing all the resources of modern mechanism. The Greenleaf Theatre is a school for community drama, and we have returned to the traditions and methods of the pre-Elizabethan days when the travelling minstrel flourished, and drama was played out-of-doors or in the homes of the people—for the simple reason that practical experience in an English country district showed us that community drama is a thing of those same conditions.

With the idea of relating art in some way with the people, and reaching them in their homes and schools and public places, we set to work seven years ago to find what could be achieved with simple materials in small space, without architectural devices or complex lighting. We began in the ancient town of Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, a little stone-built mediæval place just as it was left by the Flemish weavers three hundred years ago; and we discovered that the first essential was *posture*—and that that was all that could be got from untrained players. Train them to assume descriptive and expressive positions, and then to hold them, and one gets some sort of repose and unity upon the stage.

Nowadays it appears almost impossible for a performer (trained or untrained) to keep still for two minutes together. His eyes wander, his body twitches, his head, neck, every part, vibrates like ill-regulated mechanism. So the first thing needed was not "natural expression," but repose and self-control.

*EDITOR'S NOTE.—Probably no other "insurgent" playhouse in this country has been founded with quite so clear an ideal, and backed by such broad experience in relating dramatic art to community life, as has the Greenleaf Theatre, recently established in New York by Maxwell Armfield and Constance Smedley (Mrs. Armfield). We felt that a summary of the experience of these artists in little-theatre production in England would be of particular interest to experimental groups in this country, especially as regards their conclusions about the correlative importance of posture, voice use and decorative design. We therefore asked Mrs. Armfield to prepare this article for THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE.



A poster of the Greenleaf Theatre, showing the figure of "The Minstrel," with costume by Maxwell Armfield. The picture also suggests the care with which every posture of the actors is designed. The simple background, with its bit of decorative embroidery, is typical of the settings used at the Greenleaf Theatre.



A scene from a production on the stage of the Greenleaf Theatre. The curtains at the sides mark the limits of the proscenium opening. The producers have deliberately adopted such a restricted stage in order to force a return to the fundamental elements of dramatic art: beauty of diction and grace of posture and movement—with results described in the accompanying article by Constance Smedley.

Then followed economical use of gesture, no more than was inevitable. An additional reason for economy of gesture was the lack of space. We had to produce plays on stages six feet by nine. From this we took two feet for an apron stage. Naturalistic movement was out of the question. To create any illusion, the most carefully considered grouping and movement were essential. But this very limitation enabled us to begin to coördinate movement and gesture synthetically. When there are only a few gestures to stage-manage they can be arranged to express group movement or rhythm. Form and line became as important in our work as in a sculptor's bas-relief.

Then came the problem of lighting. We had neither electricity nor any other fittings, adjustable at different heights and places. Sometimes we had a gas jet, sometimes two oil lamps, sometimes an acetylene motor lamp. We had no footlights, toplights, or sidelights. We could attempt moonlight with blue paper or glass, but there could be no transmission from one effect to another. The lighting had to be permanent throughout each play or interlude.

As for our staging, most of our performances were given in village schoolrooms. The desks formed the platform, and we had to put them together, erect four wooden posts and hang them with our curtains, and take down the structure after the show, between four-thirty and ten-thirty each evening. We played in some twenty-three villages, under these conditions. Yet a curtain in itself was not enough. We were aiming at stage pictures which would convey some idea of the atmosphere and milieu of the scene. Screens and pylons are excellent devices for a land blessed with universal automobiles, but our transportation service was usually a tiny pony cart, or carrier's wagon.

We had to get scenic effects with stuff, and hence embroidery came to the rescue. Stencilling or batik cracks and rubs, and painted stuff has a flimsy look; but a window of deep blue checked with black broad bars, appliquéd, or pinned to a curtain, gives quite a solid air. We used stencilling as well as embroidery on the dresses, for we saw each stage picture as a decoration into which the introduction of an irrelevant design, by another hand, would mean confusion of artistic treatment. Of course universal pattern, such as stripe, spot or check was excepted. And there was another good reason for this insistence on original pattern. On such a small stage we could only use just sufficient of a pattern to suggest its presence. We introduced it on parts of a dress where, on a large stage, masses

could have been used. We used it merely to emphasize our points; and if we had occasion for a flare of splendor, a cloak or gown that was embroidered assumed the dignity and importance of a leading part of the structural design, and its design was proportionately interesting.

Then we were forced into an intensive study of color. We expressed with color the emotions and progress of the action. When figures were unimportant in a scene we arranged their costumes so that they melted into the background, by turning at a certain angle. You cannot have three or four onlookers on a tiny stage, even though it extend to twelve feet by nine, and yet allow of the central characters' carrying on the action independently, unless some way of retiring the minor characters is devised. Now, on our stages, there was no place to retire to; seven characters were as close a pack as was comfortable, and nine almost an impossibility. But not quite. We played John Drinkwater's *Cophetua* with that number on the stage for most of the performance.

Again, we used color as lighting. When the action of the play demanded a dark or gloomy atmosphere, we suppressed the color; we hid costumes with wraps and cloaks, and as the action proceeded, the dark sheaths fell off exposing brilliant hues. We rang tunes and changes on combinations of color, in harmony with the changing tunes of the play. We used properties in this work. We gradually filled a stage with color by adroitly adjusted wreaths or trophies, removing them when we wished to decrease the brilliance, not by attendants or in any way unnaturally, but through the business of the play. The audience saw nothing except aids to action of a normal character. Someone cleared a wall and deposited the wreaths within the box they came in.

With this interest in pictorial possibilities, we also occupied ourselves with the possibilities of sound. We had to handle all kinds of voices from the mincing tones of gentility to the broadest dialect. Enunciation, pitch, inflection, formed an endless chain of problems. We decided the primal need was *rhythm*, and set to work to write and find plays with strongly marked rhythms which we could establish audibly and visibly. Voices accented the rhythm as gesture did. Then came intonation and pitch. We could not always find sufficient men. *Cophetua* gave us seven men to two women. Hence my husband worked out the speeches of the Five Wise Men on the piano, numbering the words so that each player could find his own convenient

pitch and then learn the relative pitch of each word precisely, though not singing or intoning. After all, the speaking voice is always definitely placed on notes. The exact placing of the notes helped the rhythm, and women could find and keep low notes corresponding with those the men used. This kept a flat decorative effect, in harmony with the flat grouping and dressing of this "Chorus," while each player thoroughly studied the part (each strongly characterized) and developed intelligent expression. John Drinkwater came down to the dress rehearsal, and neither he nor the audience noticed the sex of his "men," nor troubled which was which. In community drama a company is often kaleidoscopic, and we played the Five Wise Men in countless combinations, from an all-man to an all-woman cast.

Just about at this point, 1913, we saw that dramatic art was no more imitative than any other art — but expressive — and that it should be as lawfully regulated as musical composition. We saw tempo was all-important, and it interested us greatly when we came across the fact that the Greeks used *accelerandos* and *ritardandos*, *staccatos* and *legatos*, and so on, in their presentations. We had arrived at the conclusion because such raw material drove us to formulate simple rules which could be universally applied and which anyone could understand and work by. It is amazing to realize that the most highly trained dramatic executants we knew about used the same kind of rules and laws as those which village players could easily understand; and yet, was not the Greek Chorus drawn from the community too, and was not the Greek drama intimately connected with the people's aspirations and expression?

The argument may here be answered, "Is not this a mechanical system, turning actors into monkeys?" To which I would reply, "Is not the difference between the monkey and the man, that the monkey imitates and the man understands?" And "Which is the greater: the artist who, from wax, models flowers you could mistake for natural ones, or the artist who with a few strokes of his brush places before you the very essence and characteristics of a flower, and yet fills the space with pleasant decoration?" The musician who understands the laws of music, and obeys them, is not necessarily mechanical.

To the inevitable laws of stagecraft, of course, each actor adds as much intelligence and understanding of the meaning of his lines as he can contribute. In this synthetic work, the actors are, however, all aiming at expressing an idea, coöperatively; they come together to create a specific and clearly defined art-

form. In 1905 Gordon Craig laid down most definitely and truly the scope and mission of the Director. To him the Director is the artist of a picture, the sculptor of a frieze, the conductor of an orchestra or a quartet, a ballet master. No one can direct who is acting on the stage. He cannot see the complete effect subjectively.

Naturally we had to write plays in line with our conclusions. The play of the complex commercial, or even the art stage, was utterly impractical. We had to devise plays without furniture, and with the minimum of properties. Then, too, the old-fashioned imitative play had little rhythm, and still less clearly defined development of an idea possible of synthetic treatment. The characters worked at irrelevant angles, and their constant going and coming had the confusion of a cinema, where we wanted the repose of the unfoldment of a flower. Add to this the complex emotional demands upon the players and you will see our further difficulties. For we believed in teaching one step at a time. Before players can beautifully express emotion they must go through their scales and five-finger exercises, know how to phrase, how to use inflections, how to pose. So we began to write short plays in various periods and styles. We handled modern scenes, presenting one in the method of a Caran D'Ache; another atmospherically, with one candle and facial expression as our chief ingredients. We began to experiment with prose rhythms, showing how naturally the speaking voice develops into song, from slow words into rising and falling cadences until joy lifts expression into lyrical verse, controlled and deepened by a turn of the emotion, or amplified, by the entrance of another part, into *largo* or crashing chords.

Some plays were written in simple prose, others in formal verse; others, and these I am most interested in, show the change of metre and verse form. But we always wrote synthetically, that is, we mentally heard the combination of vocal sounds as we mentally saw the combination of pictorial effects. Thus the color plot, the gesture plot, the movement plot, were coordinated exactly with the development of the rhythm of the words, which again expressed and made clear the unfoldment of the idea.

After some years of persistent experiment with these principles, in town and country, we came to the conclusion that America was the right place for a community drama clearing-house and school, where experiments in school, college, village and home entertainment might be made and seen; and to this end we have established our Greenleaf Theatre in New York.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated review, published four times each year, in the months of December, February, May and September, by Sheldon Cheney. Editorial and business office at 220 West 42nd Street, New York, New York.

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Entered as second-class matter January 24, 1918, at the postoffice at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1918, by Sheldon Cheney. Yearly subscription, \$1.50. Single copies, 50 cents.

Editorial Comment

Our Ideals and Our Critics FROM the window nearest the editorial desk one may look down on Times Square, the very center of American dramatic commerce. On Garfield-less nights one may see the gaudy lights of Broadway spread out in fantastic, changing patterns — pitilessly symbolic of the artificial glamour and ephemeral value of so much that is current on the New York stage. In the building in which the Magazine has its home scores of moving-picture producers have their offices. We are, indeed, in the very center of one of the plague spots of the theatre world.

In our moving into these surroundings, certain of our correspondents affect to see a surrender of those progressive principles and ideals for which this magazine has stood. Lest the misunderstanding go farther, let us reaffirm that we are interested primarily in the creation of a new and independent theatre in America; and that we intend to resist with all our resources the evils of commercialization and vulgarization. Our fight will be made particularly against certain conventions and usages which have served to degrade dramatic art: the star system, the long run, direction by business men instead of artists, insincere intentions, and hasty production.

We recognize that the present American theatre is a monstrous anomaly,—that what used to be an art has become primarily a speculative business. But, unlike certain of our critics, we are not ready to scrap the entire mechanism of the modern stage. We believe that there are arts bigger than any which the little theatres can develop without aid from the professional stage. We are more interested in the best work of the little theatres and experimental art theatres than in the stereotyped Broadway product—because any new theatre in America needs first of all the freshness of viewpoint, cultural background and inventive genius of the "outside" artist and enthusiast. But it can helpfully assimilate some steadying influences and many mechanical aids from the older theatre. We shall continue to seek material "wherever the creative spirit touches theatre work, whether in professional or in non-professional channels."



Immorality at the Opera House NOTHING could indicate the American's distorted sense of morality better than the storm of journalistic discussion which followed the appearance of a nude dancer on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The questioned dance was not obscene. The single figure on the stage was statuesque and

remote — quite welcome free from all the suggestiveness and sensual appeal cultivated by half-clad girls in the usual Broadway "show." This same dancer was far more vulgar in other numbers on the same program, when she appeared with more clothing but in animated dances which revealed certain wobbly-jelly tendencies of her figure.

But vulgarity aside, if one woman chooses to appear for a fleeting moment without clothing, is it important enough to be heralded forth by every newspaper in the nation's largest city? Is not our respectability a bit over-conscious when it makes a metropolis' sensation of a glimpse of a human body? To a thinking person the attitude of press and public give more reason for pause than did the original performance.

If Helen Moller really was immoral, her offense lay in violating art. She pretended to the highest æsthetic standard, when in truth she and her pupils are only half-baked artistically. Unfortunately there is no law or custom classing this sort of offense as immoral.

But there is real immorality at the Opera House, and it is practised openly day after day and month after month. It consists in selling, to those who expect to see and hear opera with some comfort, seats from which it is impossible to see more than a small fraction of the stage. Hundreds of seats in the auditorium are cut off from a view of more than half the stage space, and yet tickets for these are regularly sold with the implied understanding that the purchasers will "see the show." No other business is allowed thus openly to obtain money under false representations. If the police and the newspapers really want to do away with immorality at the Opera House, why not start with the flagrant dishonesty at the box office?



A Futile War WE CAN attach no importance to the far-heralded war that has broken out between the Shuberts and Klaw and Erlanger. It is true that the break ends that alliance which gave an allied group of capitalists control over most of the theatres in America. But it is still true that no independent producer can profitably take a play out through the country without paying tribute to one syndicate or the other.

When the Shuberts and their new rivals coöperated there was a monopoly before which practically every theatre owner in America was forced to bow down. Now there are two trusts fighting each other—but both are bound by a primary interest in profits rather than art, both are out to stifle independent competition, both have shown an utter disregard for those qualities in drama which please discriminating audiences rather than the rabble bent on sensational or farcical amusement.

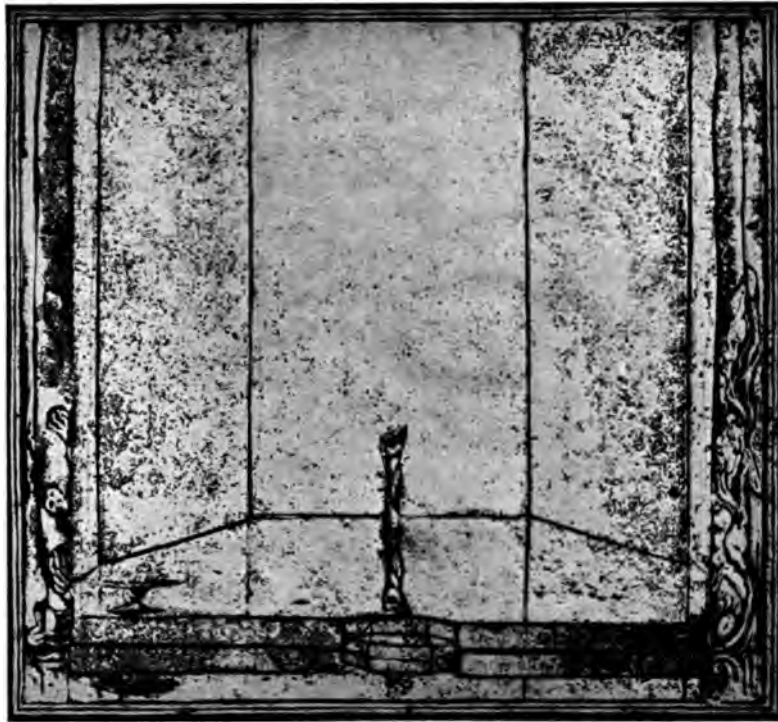
This war means that a few New York producers will have the choice of working with one uninspired group of capitalists or another. For the rest of the country, and for theatre art, the booking-agents' disagreement means nothing.



WE ARE indebted to Robert Jones for the design which appears upon our cover. The figure is adapted from an engraving by Callot.

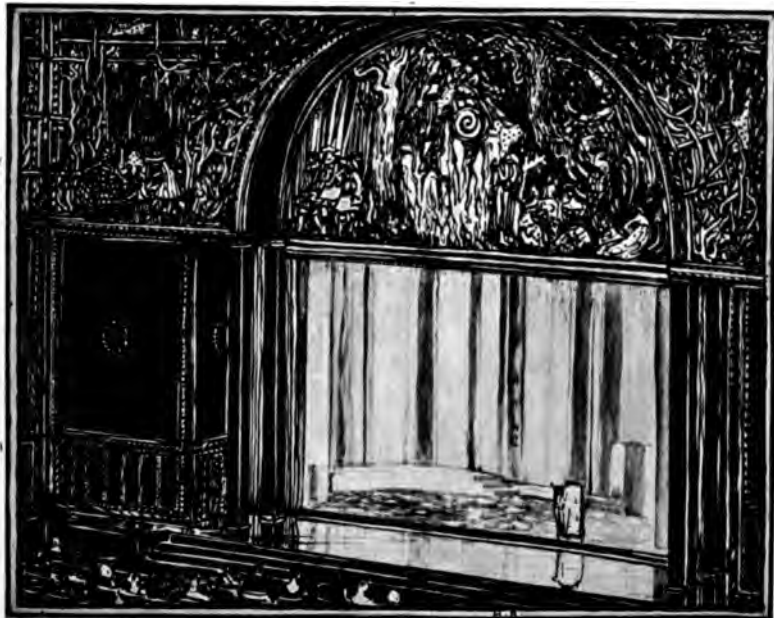


THROUGH an error in make-up, the captions for illustrations on pages 8 and 14 of our December issue were transposed. Readers who preserve their copies for reference are asked to note that the setting shown on page 8 is that for *Overtures*, while that on page 14 is for *The Magical City*.



Four Designs for Stages, by Hermann Rosse, are shown on this and the following three pages. The artist writes: "Most people designing for the stage seem to be occupied with scenic reforms. To me it is much more important to develop some new types of stage and theatre." From an extensive series of sketches, in which the form of the stage is fitted to various types of production, we are permitted to reproduce four varied examples. The one shown above is a stage for a dancer, with an all-gold scene—with flat gold screens at the back and gold patterned curtains at the sides.





In the design above Hermann Rosse has combined an apse-like stage with an apron stage in an arrangement of unusual interest. The decorative richness here is in marked contrast to the severe simplicity of the design on the opposite page. Of the latter the designer writes: "A theatre built like an egg, of concrete with wooden finish, would give a proscenium arrangement like this, expressing in its shape the plastic material of which it is built."



This is an "all-curtain" stage, as designed by Hermann Rosse for a masque-like production projected for the huge Municipal Auditorium in San Francisco. Both the inner and outer proscenium frames were designed to be adjustable, and free use was to be made of the immense forestage.

The Theatre Arts Chronicle

The Independent Theatre Association

DELEGATES from eight little theatre organizations, and others interested in independent dramatic production, met at the offices of the Chicago Little Theatre on November 29 and 30 and December 1, to form an association of those interested in the progressive movement in the American theatre. The activities of the convention included business meetings and attendance at various social functions and at two performances by the Chicago Little Theatre Company.

Reports of local activities were made by the delegates, and the following committee was then appointed to formulate a plan of organization: Maurice Speiser, Chairman; Maurice Browne, Frederick Bruegger, Charles Myall and Mrs. James A. Stewart. This committee reported the following recommendations, which were adopted by the convention:

(1) That such an association as the committee was appointed to consider be formed; (2) that the association be known as "The Independent Theatre Association of America"; (3) that the officers for the first year be two only, a President and a Secretary-Treasurer; (4) that the offices of the Secretary-Treasurer be the offices of the Association; (5) that at least one meeting be held annually, its place and time to be decided by the officers; (6) that THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE be the official organ of the Association; (7) that membership in the Association be open to all organizations and individuals wishing to join; (8) that membership fees be five dollars annually for organizations, and two dollars annually for individuals; (9) that membership fees include one year's subscription to THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE; (10) that, from the membership, representatives of the Association be appointed in different centers.

The following four recommendations regarding the relations of theatres to playwrights were also adopted: (1) That the convention go on record as definitely opposed to unauthorized productions of copyrighted plays. (2) That scripts of all American plays produced by members of the Association be sent, by their producers, together with comments on their literary and dramatic value and on their method of production, to the Secretary-Treasurer, giving the Association complete rights of publication at its discretion on payment to the author of a royalty of ten per cent on all sales, but reserving all dramatic rights to the original owners. (3) That standard royalties be paid on American plays produced by members of the Association as follows: (a) For short one-act plays, five dollars per performance for the first three performances, or alternatively, fifteen dollars for one week of not more than eight performances, or for six scattered performances; (b) for plays of medium length, ten dollars per performance for the first three performances, or alternatively, thirty dollars for a week of not more than eight performances, or for six scattered performances; (c) for full-length plays, fifteen dollars per performance for the first three performances, or alternatively, fifty dollars for one week of not more than eight performances, or for six scattered performances. (4) That ten per cent of all such royalties be paid by the producing member to the Association, and deducted accordingly from payments to the author.

The committee also recommended that the report of the convention be published and sent, together with an invitation to join the Association, to organizations and individuals likely to be interested.

Maurice Browne was elected President, and Maurice Speiser Secretary-Treasurer, for the ensuing year.

This Association marks the first attempt to ally all the forces working for a non-commercialized theatre in this country, and it is hoped that all little theatre and art theatre organizations and workers will join. Those desiring to become members should communicate with the Secretary-Treasurer at the following address: 403 Penn Square Building, Philadelphia.

Plans of the Portmanteau STUART WALKER has announced that the Portmanteau Theatre will resume its itinerant productions next season, with practically the same company as heretofore, and with notable additions to the repertory of plays. This season the success of *Seventeen*, which Mr. Walker has presented in Chicago and New York in the usual business-theatre, long-run way, prevented the Portmanteau company from taking its portable theatre on the road. A few plays from its repertory were shown at special matinées in Chicago.

In New York the company appeared in a special matinée performance of *The Book of Job*. The production proved to be the most notable yet attempted by Stuart Walker. The acting was not uniformly good, and there were occasional evidences of lax preparation. But the leading players spoke their lines with a relish for the beauties of the biblical verse; and the setting, lighting and general stage management were in advance of anything heretofore achieved by the Portmanteau organization. The musical accompaniment aided in creating an atmosphere of spirituality and quiet reverence, which was preserved throughout. George Gaul deserves special mention for his admirable interpretation of the rôle of Job. We publish on page 113 a sketch of the setting as designed by Frank Zimmerer. The two Expositors appeared in the niches at each side, and when the drama proper began, these were darkened so that attention was concentrated on the central scene. S. A.

At the Theatre Du Vieux Colombier IN OUR last issue we reported the initial productions of Jacques Copeau's company in New York, attempting to express our appreciation with enthusiasm tempered by reserve. With more than half the season now gone, we find ourselves still doubtful about the value of certain of the plays produced and certain innovations in staging, but unreservedly enthusiastic about the organization's work in general. There has been steady progress toward that sort of acting which combines naturalness with a quiet distinction, the staging has been pictorially effective without being obtrusive, and the company has gained in smoothness as the new members fitted gradually into the machine-like organization. The two outstanding features have been the productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Les Freres Karamazov*. Of the latter play Rollo Peters has something to say on page 84. But we are reserving for a later issue a review of all the plays offered at the *Vieux Colombier*, and we hope to present at the same time an article by Jacques Copeau, reviewing the work from his viewpoint as Director. S. C.

Faustus at Detroit *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, in a short version arranged by Samuel Eliot, Jr., was the principal feature of the January bill at the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit, and was one of the best-liked productions in two seasons of well-received programs. Sam Hume must have feared that it might be too stiff for the popular taste,

and that the scholarly would object to the drastic cutting to which the play had been subjected. But the result showed that he was right in risking the production. There was rejoicing among the learned over the fact that the cutting had been so judiciously done, and that thereby a masterpiece had been made available for modern uses other than scholarly and antiquarian. Those who enjoy a "good show" enjoyed *Doctor Faustus* too. Questionnaires were distributed among the frequenters of the Arts and Crafts Theatre, and the answers ranked this play among the most popular given so far. The shortened version is certainly to be recommended to little theatres that care to undertake difficult but worth-while projects.

Mr. Eliot's version uses only one scene, Faustus' study, and covers the lapse of twenty years by a skillful selection of dialogue passages. The most famous lines are all retained. The material omitted is that which is least intelligible to modern audiences.

Several technical devices made the play easy to follow. The stage was built on several planes. Faustus' study was a raised stage at the back with a great stained-glass window over the table. Angelic visitants appeared in this window. In front of the study was a second, lower plane on which appeared Helen of Troy, the scholars, and the Seven Deadly Sins. The evil spirits came up through a trap just back of the footlights. This simple use of planes helped immeasurably in following the scheme of the play.

A deep impression was made by the masks worn by the Seven Deadly Sins. Some of them were conceived quite in the spirit of the most extreme school of modern sculpture, others were more nearly like the Elizabethan masks, and several left the impression of being creations of Freudian race dreams. There was terrible familiarity about them, and yet they seemed never to have existed. In spite of this diversity of type there was no incongruity.

The costuming was rich in the extreme, and the reading was rich and sonorous. The lines were given with the emphasis on rhythmic beauty rather than on realism. The meaning was not necessarily obscured, but the effort was apparently made rather to stress their emotional and imaginative content.

The whole performance was thoroughly satisfying to the most diverse tastes in the audience. It proved conclusively that *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* is now available to large audiences, and is no longer a book closed to all but literarily trained minds.

FRANK G. TOMPKINS.

Progress at Cincinnati WITH excellent prospects for a successful continuation of the good effort next season, the first season of the Cincinnati Players recently came to a close. The Players, for whose existence Miss Ruth Allen is largely responsible, have had a beginning beset with many difficulties. During their first year they have produced fifteen plays, including both full-length and one-act pieces. The performances have been given in Memorial Hall, which, while it proved a delightful little home, had the disadvantage of being rather cramped in space, so that preparations for each production had to be made in an outside studio.

The artistic success of the latter part of the season was largely due to the efforts of Malcolm Morley, who took charge the first of the year. Mr. Morley is an actor of wide experience in the professional theatre, and also has a firm belief in the future of the little theatre movement. Indefatigable as a worker, Mr. Morley succeeded in giving performances of decided artistic merit. Among the plays which were produced under his direction are *The New Sin*

by B. M. Hastings, *Lonesomelike* by Harold Brighouse, *Pantaloons* by J. M. Barrie, *Passers-by* by C. Haddon Chambers, *Barbarians* by Rita Wellman, *Efficiency* by R. H. Davis and P. P. Sheehan, and *The Workhouse Ward* by Lady Gregory. One of the most interesting features of the latter part of the season was the first production of *Alan Intrudes* by Harold Heaton, a comedy in three acts. The play was directed by the author himself. The Players hope to continue their work next season with some changes in policy which will grant a larger scope. Interest shown in the venture so far seems to warrant the assurance of support for succeeding years.

RICHARD SILVESTER.



At the Little and Experimental Theatres

The Artists Guild Theatre of St. Louis, which, under the direction of Irving Pichel, has recently taken high rank among art theatre ventures in this country, is continuing its policy of presenting programs of one-act plays at four performances each month. In December the following plays were produced: *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, *The Little Man* by John Galsworthy, and the mediæval play *Abraham and Isaac*. The January bill was as follows: *Everybody's Husband* by Gilbert Cannan, *Another Way Out* by Lawrence Langner, and Sam Hume's pantomime *The Romance of the Rose*. In February the program was Arthur Symons' *Cleopatra in Judea* and Andreyeff's *The Pretty Sabine Women*.

The Provincetown Players of New York produced in December *Down the Airshaft* by Irwin Granich, *The Angel Intrudes* by Floyd Dell, and *The Outside* by Susan Glaspell. The January bill was as follows: *The Slave with Two Faces* by Mary Carolyn Davies, *About Six* by Grace Potter, and *Sweet and Twenty* by Floyd Dell. On March first the Players produced their first full-length drama, a peace-play of mixed classicism and modernism by George Cram Cook, entitled *The Athenian Women*.

The January production of the San Francisco Little Theatre included four one-act plays: *Ruby Red* by Clarence Stratton, *The Merry Death* by Nicholas Evreinov, *Joint Owners in Spain* by Alice Brown, and *Christmas on the Border* by R. C. Croxton. The following bill was scheduled for early March: *The Price of Orchids* by Winifred Hawkrige, *The Simoom* by August Strindberg, *Big Kate* by Charles Nirdlinger, and *The Unreturning* by Mrs. Frederick G. Schiller. Our San Francisco correspondents report a notable improvement in acting and staging at the Little Theatre during the current season.

The Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit presented in January, as the second production of its regular season, the following plays: *The Noble Lord* by Percival Wilde, a short version, by Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and Lord Dunsany's *The Prince of Stamboul*—the last-named being accorded its first presentation on any stage. The February bill was as follows: *The Grasshopper* by Lyman Bryson, *The Price of Coal* by Harold Brighouse, *A Farewell Supper* by Arthur Schnitzler, and *Ilda's Honourable* by Gertrude Robins. The assistant director of the theatre, Frederic McConnell, has been called into army service. Elsewhere in this issue a fuller report of the *Doctor Faustus* production is published.



At the Little and Experimental Theatres I I I

The Playshop Players of Chicago produced at their Philistine Theatre in February the following one-act plays: *The Shadow* by P. B. Corneau, *The Prodigal Son* by Harry Kemp, *Barbara* by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, and *Their Country* by Nat M. Kahn and Michael Leishin. The March program was announced to include *The One on the End* by Charles A. Myall, and three one-act plays with a recurring theme by Julian F. Thompson.

A new experimental group has been organized in New York under the name "The Other Players," with Alfred Kreymborg and Julian Freedman as directors. The first production will occur at the Provincetown Theatre in March, with the following program: *Manikin and Minikin* by Alfred Kreymborg, *Two Slatterns and a King* by Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Jack's House* by Alfred Kreymborg and Julian Freedman, and "static dances" by Rihani. The Other Players are an outgrowth of the new poetry movement which earlier resulted in the publication of the "Others" anthologies of free verse. The first aim of the new organization is to restore spoken poetry to the stage. Several of Mr. Kreymborg's "Plays for Poem-Mimes" were recently produced by The Players in St. Louis, and were hailed by progressive critics as a notable innovation in poetic drama.

The East-West Players, under the direction of Gustav Blum, produced in February at the Lenox Little Theatre in New York the following bill: *Winter* by Sholom Asch, *The Shadchen's Daughter* by Abraham Reisen, *Abigail* by David Pinski, and *Pawns* by Percival Wilde.

The Theatre Workshop produced Björnson's *The Gauntlet* at the People's House in New York in February. The production was later taken to the Little Theatre in Philadelphia for a two-weeks' run.

The Community Theatre at Hollywood, California, under the direction of Nelye Dickson, produced in December four one-act plays: *Catherine Parr* by Maurice Baring, *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, *How He Lied to Her Husband* by Bernard Shaw, and *The Tents of the Arabs* by Lord Dunsany. The January bill was made up of four dramatic "sketches" by William C. deMille. The February bill was as follows: *The Neighbors* by Zona Gale, *Manikin and Minikin* by Alfred Kreymborg, *The Pierrot of the Minute* by Ernest Dowson, and a special arrangement of an act from Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan*. For March a special production of plays by Yeats and Lady Gregory, with Katherine Jewel Everts, was announced. This will close the subscription season, but the series has been so successful that additional productions will be given in April and May.

At the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York, Tony Sarg's Marionettes were seen in a bill of three plays in January. The production was later transferred uptown to the Norworth Theatre, and is now on view at the Punch and Judy Theatre. Three pantomimes were presented at the Neighborhood Playhouse later in January, and in early March the Neighborhood Players presented *Fortunato*, from the Spanish of the Quinteros, and *Tamura*, a Japanese Noh-play. The latter was produced exactly in the Japanese manner, with the use of masks and ceremonial dances preserved. Michio Ito assisted in the production.

The Little Art Theatre of Oakland, California, has announced an opening series of productions to be given during April, May and June. The organization has made over an old studio into a theatre with seating capacity of 225. The directors are Jane Edgerton and Irene Wheeler.

New Books About the Theatre

PROBLEMS OF THE PLAYWRIGHT, by Clayton Hamilton, is a collection of essays written around recent productions in New York theatres. It exhibits the author in the triple rôle of professor-critic, poet-critic and up-to-the-minute theatre-critic. The professor contributes such chapters as "Contrast in the Drama," "Strategy and Tactics," and "The Troublesome Last Act." It is unfortunate that these academic chapters should give the book its rather forbidding title. The poet-critic adds such lyric and rhapsodic reviews as "A Kiss for Cinderella" and "The Loveliness of Little Things," and these are delicately pretty studies, and well worth reading. But it is in his third rôle, as straightforward commentator on conditions in the theatre of to-day, that we find the author at his best. In such chapters as "The Long Run in the Theatre" and "A Democratic Insurrection in the Theatre" he analyzes and describes what is wrong with the American playhouse in a way that is both illuminating and inspiring. The book has its minor faults, of which lack of unity and a superstitious worship of Pinero and Jones are the worst. But altogether it contains so much of real value, and is written so sincerely and so excellently, that no student of the drama can afford to miss it. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. \$1.60.)

MRS. FISKE: HER VIEWS ON THE STAGE, recorded by Alexander Woolcott. It is refreshing to find in a book of this sort a total absence of stage gossip, press agenting and shallow platitudes about the theatre. Mrs. Fiske has kept her perspective on life while giving herself intensely to her art, and she has many common-sense things to say about actors, acting and the problems of production. In this volume we do not recognize her as "America's most intellectual actress"—as the popular catch-phrase has it. Her argument against repertory is absolutely illogical if not puerile, and there are other evidences of resort to instinct and even chance prejudice rather than thought. But in general she reveals herself as an artist of high purpose and broad understanding. Every actor and every producer should be compelled to read the volume, and every lover of the theatre can spend an enjoyable evening over it. It is, indeed, one of the most stimulating and interesting of recent theatre books. (New York: The Century Company. \$2.00.)

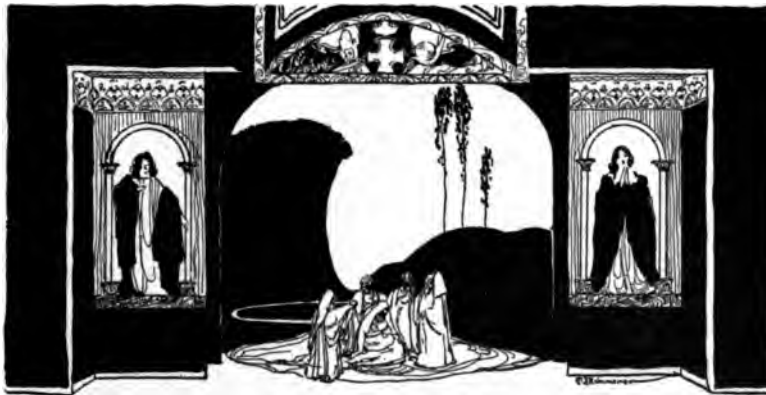
MR. GEORGE JEAN NATHAN PRESENTS, by George Jean Nathan. This is a volume of entertaining essays built around reviews of current Broadway productions. The author is in general clear-sighted in his diagnosis of the ailments of the American theatre, and he possesses a remarkably wide knowledge of European drama. He is at times brilliant, but his brilliancy occasionally slips over into flippancy; he is free alike from academic stiffness and Puritanic prejudices, but his freedom sometimes crosses the line into vulgarity and cynicism. The book is at once stimulating and irritating. It refuses to take the American stage too seriously, and there is a continual play of humor over the pages—which is a blessed relief. But just as one finishes a chapter which reveals a searching mind treating stage problems with both wit and common sense, one plunges into a chapter in which the author airs his own prejudices or builds up an overpowering case against nothing. Altogether a contradictory and worth-while book. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.50.)

THE LIFE OF AUGUSTIN DALY, by Joseph Francis Daly, must take rank among the three or four most important dramatic biographies of recent years. Despite the inclusion of hundreds of pages of inconsequential stage gossip,

and lack of literary finish, the book as a whole well repays close perusal. It tells the story of a sort of theatre that is sadly needed in New York to-day, and of a man who set his ideals above financial gain. It is a first-rate contribution to the small group of historical works about the American theatre, and a deserved memorial to one of the giants of that theatre's better days. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$4.00.)

OUTDOOR THEATRES, by Frank A. Waugh. This book bears the subtitle "The Design, Construction and Use of Open-Air Auditoriums," and is written primarily from the designer's standpoint. The chapters gathered under the heading "Questions of Use" are both brief and elementary, so that the producer of open-air plays and pageants will find the volume of very limited interest. The other divisions, called "Problems of Design" and "Selected Examples," show a surer grasp of the subject, and should prove suggestive to designers of open-air theatres. The descriptions of individual playhouses are not always reliable, and many of the finest and most representative of American and foreign examples are either unnoticed or unillustrated. But as the first publication on the subject—and one containing many plans and photographs—the book should be in every architectural and dramatic library. (Boston: Richard G. Badger. \$2.50.)

We have received the following books, but are compelled to hold over the reviews until our May issue: *Amateur and Educational Dramatics*, by Evelyn Hilliard; *Theodora* McCormick and Kate Oglebay; *Interpreters and Interpretations*, by Carl Van Vechten; *Modern Theatre Construction*, by Edward Bernard Kinsila; Volume VII of *The Dramatic Works of Gerhart Hauptmann*; *The Hostage*, by Paul Claudel; *Plays*, by Alexander Ostrovsky; *Plays*, by Jacinto Benavente; and *The Social Plays of Arthur Wing Pinero*, edited by Clayton Hamilton.



Sketch by Frank Zimmerer for the setting of *The Book of Job*, as produced by Stuart Walker.

The Newly Published Plays

THREE SHORT PLAYS by Granville Barker. For two-thirds of the way this volume shows Barker at his worst. *Rococo* is merely knockabout farce, and not the best of its kind—and of course the mood of farce is not the mood in which Barker's rare artistry can register adequately. *Voting by Ballot* is an idea-play in the loose and inconclusive style of *The Madras House*, but without that play's brilliant wit and stimulus to thought. *Farewell to the Theatre* goes far to redeem the volume. Throughout there is much suppressed feeling, and a sure literary touch. It has also the true Barker virtue of starting the reader's mind into all sorts of unexpected by-paths, opening up new and exciting vistas of thought. It is intellectual drama or dramatic literature at its best. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.00.)

MADAME SAND, by Philip Moeller, is one of the best examples of artificial comedy yet written by an American playwright. Despite lapses to mere stage cleverness, and to occasional bits of insincerity, the dialogue is in general so witty and the characterizations so good that Mr. Moeller must be marked as one of the most promising of the younger generation of dramatists. His stage directions are so much more illuminating than the acting of Mrs. Fiske's company that one gets more of the atmosphere of Madame Sand's times, and more of her picturesque character, from the reading than from the stage production. In the book, too, one feels the full play of humor against pathos, which was lost in the theatre. Any lover of comedy can spend an enjoyable two hours with the volume. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.25.)

COCAINE, by Pendleton King, is an unpleasant bit of slum-realism, but so sincerely and forcefully handled that one cannot but praise its truthfulness and dramatic appeal. The story of two dope-fiends, clinging together in their last extremity, is clearly outside the range of plays for Sunday-School dramatic clubs and "pleasant" little theatres. But for those theatres which do not shrink from tragedy, and from the portrayal of the most disagreeable truths and conditions of life, it will prove to be excellent stage material. It is a notable achievement in the limited field of stark realism. (New York: Frank Shay. 35c.)

HADDA PADDA, by Godmundur Kamban. In this play by a young Icelandic playwright one finds the austerity and seriousness of Northern drama tempered by warmer and lighter elements. It is a tragedy, but with a love-story of unusual tenderness interwoven. It is true to everyday life, and yet poetic and imaginative. In spite of faults in structure it is a big play, with that simplicity and inevitability of which the Scandinavian dramatists are masters. There are difficulties of staging which may delay its production in the American theatre. But sooner or later, we hope, some producer will be courageous enough to bring it to the stage. Incidentally the character of Hadda Padda is one of the most memorable in recent drama. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.00.)

MORE SHORT PLAYS, by Mary Macmillan, is a volume of widely varied plays and sketches. Such things as *The Pioneers*, with its obvious story and hackneyed characterizations, and *The Dress Rehearsal of Hamlet*, with its tepid wit and school-girl cleverness, hardly deserve a permanent

place in type. But in *Honey* one finds truth to life, sincerity of purpose and not a little cleverness in handling. In it, too, there is something of that welcome imaginative element which finds freer play in the less expert *The Dryad* and *At the Church Door*. These two sketches have their moments; and even *His Second Girl*, obviously a bit of "old stuff" warmed over, has a freshness of touch now and then. Altogether the volume exhibits the author as still experimenting in play-writing. It is a work of big promise rather than big achievement. (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company. \$1.50.)

PAWNS OF WAR, by Bosworth Crocker. This war play is stirring, as every recounting of the Belgian tragedy must be. It serves to arouse that futile indignation which comes from contemplating a great injustice that can never be righted. But it is inexpert as drama, and its value will always be historical rather than literary or theatrical. The dialogue is not terse, and the plot seldom escapes the obvious. The playwright has set forth an affecting series of violent moments, but this is not to be mistaken for great drama. As for the testimonials to the play's greatness, written by Professor Dickinson, Professor Baker, Professor Lewisohn and others, and printed on the book's jacket, we can only feel that they arose from a confusion of the more permanent dramatic values with the merits of the Belgian case about which the play is written. All atrocity-lovers will find the book worth reading. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. \$1.25.)

THE MORNINGSIDE PLAYS, a collection of four one-act pieces produced last season by the Morningside Players of New York, exhibit a wide range of endeavor, and pleasing freshness of view-point and sincerity of treatment. *Hattie*, by Elva de Pue, is a realistic character-study, inconclusive as drama but truthful and worth while. *One a Day*, by Caroline Briggs, is a fantasy of the trenches, refreshing in its imaginative and comic touches, and whole-somely free from partisanship. The rather amateurish dramatization of Stevenson's *Markheim* is the poorest play in the volume. Elmer Reizenstein's *The Home of the Free* is satirically interesting, and well written in a somewhat plodding way. The subject really needs the touch of a Gallic playwright, or of the Viennese Schnitzler, to do it justice. On the whole the book justifies itself by avoiding the obvious, and striking into unhackneyed fields. It must be considered as another interesting, if not at all brilliant, contribution to little-theatre literature. (New York: Frank Shay. 75c.)

BLACK 'ELL, by Miles Malleon, is a moving one-act play dealing with the terrible effects of war. It is impartial, socialistic and pacifistic, and so it could not be produced on an American stage to-day—despite the fact that it is dramatically effective and universally true. The fact that it is somewhat melodramatic does not vitiate it in a time when the whole world is thinking and acting melodramatically. In these days when most of the voices for peace have been silenced by the iron hand of authority or the violence of mob emotion, it is important that such plays as this find a wide circulation. We recommend it for your reading. (New York: Frank Shay. 35c.)

NJU, by Ossip Dymow, translated from the Russian by Rosalind Ivan. In our last issue we reviewed Ezra Pound's transcriptions of the Japanese Noh-dramas, and commented on the gulf that separates such lyrically beautiful plays from American notions of what constitutes drama. To those who care to know at first hand how far certain European dramatists are departing from the accepted Scribe-Sardou tradition in another direction, *Nju* comes as an

apt and interesting example. It is hardly more than a pattern of moods. The story of a beautiful woman, too weakly equipped to battle life's temptations, is told not with the powerful accumulation of dramatic feeling which the French or English or American playwright would have developed, but in a loose arrangement of subtly suggestive scenes. The episodes are realistic, but there is poetry and pathos and stimulus for imagination in each of them. The play is worth reading if only to remind us of something still lost from the American stage. The translation is adequate but not distinguished. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.00.)

POLLY OF POGUE'S RUN, by William O. Bates, is an historical sketch in one act, dealing with a Civil War incident in Indiana. The piece is well written, and the characterizations are good, but the dramatic essence is rather badly thinned—so much so that the play will probably find little currency outside its native state. Little theatre groups and school societies in Indiana will find it unusually apt material for staging; it is likely to prove a bit tedious elsewhere. (New York: Frank Shay. 35c.)

SACRIFICE AND OTHER PLAYS, by Rabindranath Tagore. Exquisitely worded, studded with philosophical observations, and pretty in legend, any one of the four plays here collected might stand as representative of the talents and genius of the great Indian poet-dramatist. The action is elusive, and there is a total lack of the drive, the directness and the compactness which with Western playwrights spell the essence of drama. For this very reason, to show our loss as well as our gain, we hope that some of the experimental theatres in America will bring these delicate studies to their stages. Incidentally, the volume affords much more of appeal in the reading than did Tagore's recently published masque *The Cycle of Spring*. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.50.)

THE SANDBAR QUEEN, by George Cronyn, is a realistic one-act play dealing with rough life in the Canadian Northwest. It is effective as a character-study and melodramatically. If it overdoes the local color, if the author revels a bit in showing up the profane language and crude morals of his chosen cast, one still must grant that he has told a tale which holds the interest to the last line. It is, moreover, well constructed and well written. It is a bit of native writing that no little theatre can afford to overlook. (No. 1 of *The Flying Stag Plays*. New York: Egmont Arens. 35c.)

THE EVERGREEN TREE, by Percy Mackaye, contains the text of "a song-drama of the people." The author writes that his "purpose is to dramatize community singing," and he has produced a Christmas masque designed for production by community choruses throughout the country. The result is, perhaps, as noteworthy as is possible when one sits down consciously to write folk-drama. It is difficult to take the work seriously in reading—for without the emotional accompaniment of music and the visual background of broad masses of actors, the legend seems a bit thin and the verse none too inspired. The author has put down the framework for a gigantic masque, and his text is hardly more than an indication of the completed work. As such it should have the attention of all community singing organizations and all pageant producers. Several designs for groupings and many costume plates, by Robert Edmond Jones, add interest to the volume. (New York: D. Appleton and Company. \$2.00.)



Fragments About the Future

"MY OWN idea of the finest form of national drama which this country will see adopted comprises a rhythmic conception of play, player, decoration and music. This drama will be represented in a rhythmic form of theatre. Everything henceforth is to be orchestrated to produce a single but infinitely varied total effect. We need a stage which lends itself to the simple and single vision, that brings even the most unintelligent spectator into the action of the drama and holds him there, that promotes a direction of effort on the part of all concerned which will unify the results.

"It will be found that the present search in Europe is for artistic rather than rhythmic results. The pioneers in the new movement are chiefly concerned with attaining artistic simplification, unity and suggestion. They are interpreting these ideas in the endeavor to bring order and beauty into the theatre. So far they have not made the attempt to seize the great rhythm of life and set the theatre and drama in motion with it. But this will come.

"The drama that the theatre needs is a symbolic, social and cosmic drama, not a drama of the debating-hall and dissecting-room. Such a drama will come as soon as we have reinterpreted Ibsen and have killed the fatal heresy that art is imitation."—HUNTLY CARTER, in *The New Spirit in Drama and Art*.

"NOWHERE is the theatre equipped or organized to give the widest expression to the drama of the soul. As it stands it is quite unable to serve as a house of vision. All that it can do is to show artistic intention, give hints, throw out suggestions, offer scraps of vision and imaginative interpretation, turn out pretty odds and ends of pictures, wonderfully pretty bits of imagination, wonderfully ugly bits of so-called realism, wonderfully deft bits of stagecraft. But nothing it has done or can do in its present condition has brought it or brings it within measurable distance of producing the complete vision, the design of the poet filled in by answering minds, unified and vital in all respects. . . . What is needed is a new harmonious and intelligent body of interpreters in whose hands all the processes of interpretation are complementary and complete."—HUNTLY CARTER, in *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt*.





Model by Rollo Peters for the park scene
of Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Selysette*.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Volume II

SUMMER NUMBER, 1918

Number 3

The Newest Art

By ROLLO PETERS

FIRST, my quarrel is with Gordon Craig. He came, imperious, into a decaying Theatre. Philistine Victorianism held the stage. Uttering his revolt, he outlined a beautiful, vague ideal; he laid the foundations of a potential art; he invented a phrase, but did not finish it. And since that phrase found popularity, the "New Art of the Theatre"—the source of endless and exceedingly unprofitable controversy—remains lamentably unexplained. Exaggerated by the faddists, uninterpreted by the critics, it remains a phrase.

In the insolence of his trade the journalist has fingered it, and flung it, unrhetical, uninterpreted, in the face of a mystified public. Always suspicious of artistic affectation, of that terrible Dark where lurk the wolves of Cubism and Futurism, that public has fled before it into the fictitious sunlight of musical-comedy comfort. The little theatres have embroidered it upon a silken banner, too fragile for a world of storm. It is oftenest upon the lips of the perpetual amateur, who, in his turn, has played with it and soiled its meaning, adding to the unfinished phrase—only a question-mark.

Most baffled by it are the commercial critics; most curious is their attitude towards it. Since they are trained in the artificialities of the Victorian stage (or naively innocent of any training whatsoever), the renaissance of the Theatre is outside the limits of their comprehension. Unprepared for close æsthetic analysis, protected by no comparisons, the new expressive and beautiful scenery leaves them nonplussed. That quality of an intrinsic beauty, fresh, functioning *through* and not *by* externalities, has been generally sensed by them. Yet it is true that these same critics—the most astute among them—can publicly mistake misdirected energies of a David Belasco and the superficialities of a Livingston Platt for manifestations of those arts which are of the Theatre. They can find praise—and much of it—for the artistic debacles of an imported *Henry VIII*, a foreign *Chu Chin Chow*, and a native *Wanderer*. The æsthetic horizon of the Broadway dramatic critic is essentially geographical.

One of these questions the originality of the new art, putting forward the theory that modern stagecraft is founded upon principles of the Greek amphitheatre and the Elizabethan platform. This is a half-truth; too architectural a statement; too easy an assertion. The Greek Proscenium does arch the stage of the Modern Theatre, but fluid and original influences are at work within the frame. Color flowers there, mountains rise and seas sink, in fluctuating lights; receding, increasing, beyond the margin of Elizabethan dreams. There art has succeeded former artlessness and later artifice. A new field opens to the creative worker. A craft presents itself, inclusive of all the arts—an untried craft. This "New Art"—is it "of the Theatre"? . . . To me, it is the newest of all arts.

So much for the unfinished phrase, the vague ideal, the potential art; and the clamor that is always attendant upon revolution. So much for my quarrel (which is no quarrel, after all) with Gordon Craig. He has done his work. He has his place. But now the Theatre moves at the impulse of younger energies; moves on the changing surface of the New Age. To presume that one mind could compass an art of such large potentiality is indeed presumption. The vision of Gordon Craig is peculiarly personal and fine. It covers but a part of the ground. Other artists are rounding off the phrase which was his only indiscretion. With him there can be no quarrel, but rather gratitude. For he has indicated a virgin province of æsthetics; a craft broad enough for all philosophies, for many methods, for any vision.

It is a vast continent, a wide land; and there lies under its capes and glorious mountains, the blue sea of Music, misty, immeasurably deep. In the shallows of that sea are fishes that flash with the brilliance of tropic flowers; the depths are dim with all forgotten silences. Here, forever cool in the breath of that sea, are strands and blossoming champaigns. And the sunlight, shining over the mountains and the forelands and the sea, is like the laughter of Gods.

It is a new, a better land. . . .

II

Out of the very newness, the unaccustomedness, of the new art comes much of the confusion which obscures its meaning. The artist in the Theatre, independent of tradition, unexplained by custom, rises before an audience whose every prejudice is founded on convention. All of the arts, save that of the Theatre, evolved slowly with the movement of civilization itself. Out of

an anachronistic Theatre, the new art has sprung to a kind of completion under our eyes—a completion of theory, if not of method. This full-fledged birth is, in itself, extraordinary, unconventional; and the shock to an audience, still muffled in Victorian decencies, is understandable. Again: charlatan pretension has discouraged opinion. The very frequent misapplication, insincere or merely ineffectual, of the principles of the new stagecraft has added to the chaos of doubt already existing in the public mind. And yet again: the adult critic—adult in sophistication only—has looked upon a young and original art with the suspicion that it was the child of yesterday's traditions.

To him there is truly nothing new under the sun. He feeds upon the crumbs fallen from the tables of the theatrical Past. Possessing no creative rapture, he stands phantastically apart, the Spectre at the Feast, mute to the golden laughter, perceiving neither the golden wine nor the golden fruit, but only the poor crusts fallen from the table. He stands behind the herd, torn between the Shakespearean Past and the Musical-Comedy Present, as unconsciously dependent upon the artist as the artist is consciously independent of him. Yet I believe that a beneficial mutuality would grow up between the two if the critic, whose approach is always personal, could be made to realize how impersonal are the aspirations of the younger artists in the Theatre.

But it is not a school of criticism that the artist prays for—Heaven forbid! Rather for the abolition of a trade which has lost its function; which, where it should lead, awkwardly follows the appreciations of the multitude,—a trade which masks its incapacities in the brittle glaze of laughter. For that; and for a gradual human development, the tapping of latent understandings,—for the foundation of a great æsthetic audience.

In the Theatre this will be achieved when, through the unceasing efforts of the younger artists, out of their relative failures, a technique has been evolved, so complete and so sensitive as to insure the fullest revelation of the new art.

An expressive technique is the artist's perfected understanding of his medium, its manipulation and meaning. It is only when the artist comes to a profound realization of his art that it is understood by the audience. If his vision is as clear as sunlight to himself, the revelation of that vision will be clear to all men. A complete relation between his audience and himself is then established; and it is here, in the fervid, human rhythm of exchange, that his faculties ripen, or rot. This relation, this

sympathetic *communion* with the audience, limits or increases, according to the scope of his genius, the artist's capacities for expression. It is as the sun to the fruit.

Technical facility is not the sum of the creative worker's technique. It is the horizon of his vision only that limits him. Cezanne, the unsatisfied genius, who in a life-long struggle with his medium never achieved technical dexterity, saw deeper into the mysteries of æsthetics than any of the merely facile painters of his day. He chose to battle with the unconquerable. He looked upon the unattainable. He saw it for all men. To Cezanne, the easy suavities of Bouguereau were to be admired for what they represented—perfection of style and a complete technique, completely expressing a point-of-view of complete vulgarity. Dexterity is a dangerous thing. The value of a work of art lies far deeper than the paint upon it, under the pattern of detail.

Technique is the voice that utters the thoughts of the artist. The music of that voice varies with the singer; but, if the song he sings be earnest, if the melody be profound and passionate, we hear in it the blue surf of the heavens beating against the stars; we sense in it the dim and fearful margins of experience—those margins which are Immortality. The communication of the unknown beautiful, through the artist to the multitude, more than war or peace, beyond the rise and fall of kings, and bishops, and merchants, *is* civilization. The quality of its artists—their ardor, their reverence—is the measure of that civilization. Foreign though this be to the teachings of historian and priest, none the less is it true that through the voice of the artist the voice of a truly universal God has ever spoken; and speaks now at the death-bed of old religions; clearer, stronger than the dying, and more permanent.

But the craft of the ascetic artist, secure in the comfort of his isolation, touched by no human movement of heat or cold, is as barren as are the rewards of him who sells his talents at the market price.

Coming into the Theatre, the artist finds himself in direct communication with the public. How can he be but awed by the power that is in his hands? Upon the stage the most diaphanous vision becomes plastic, organic, vivid with life. Here a complexity of senses finds satisfaction. Here is reality.

III

Of all the arts, those of the Theatre are the closest to life. The Theatre is the mask of life—the mask of our Mask of Life.

Its vitality has surged and fallen always with the movement of contemporary culture. Nietzsche, the Wise, it was who said that the production of the nobler form of Tragedy—as that of the Greeks under Pericles, when the life of Greece was whole and ripe—was possible only in a vigorous people; that the popularization of Comedy—as upon the later stage of degraded Rome—was a mark of national decadence.

If this be true, then in the mirror of the Theatre our culture smiles at its own image; mistaking extravagance for beauty; for dramatic power, a false technique; for ethics, a hypocritical, false morality. But the New Age is at hand—the cleansing, the renaissance, and it is not singular that it should first stir to movement in the Theatre, the complement, the echo of passing life.

In Europe, this has already come to pass. To-day the plays of the great modern authors, from Ibsen to Claudel, are current in Continental theatres. The principles of a newer and more sensitive stagecraft, acknowledged and developed, have superseded traditional outworn methods.

If the American has little opportunity for seeing the great modern plays enacted, he at least is familiar with them in the library. No matter how revolutionary are the tendencies of modern dramatic authors, the dramatist-tradition is too definitely established to receive anything but respect.

On the other hand, the pictorial arts of the Theatre, so long discounted and slurred, are dignified in no such way. The artist who renounces the studio for the stage must expect no gentle treatment. In fact, as Lee Simonson amusedly remarks, the name of the man who designed and supervised the entire pictorial production of a play, whose influence is upon the audience from the rise of the curtain to its fall, is still placed (though by managerial courtesy it sometimes heads the list) among the names of the florists, the wig-makers, and the costumiers, at the end of the program.

In this discrepancy—itsself of little importance—is the indication of a condition. The artist is not yet established in the Theatre. Forsaking the atelier for the stage, he finds himself upon a middle ground, which is no more the position of the easel-artist, fixing in the quiet of the studio his florid dreams, than it is that of the ordinary scenic-painter, whose contribution to the artistic treasure of the race is, at its best (and, unfortunately, the “best is but the worst”), decidedly questionable. There is a certain catalogue which has formed the inspirational basis for much of the scene-painter’s work in the past. I have seen this

remarkable volume. I have held it in my hands. It contains what are apparently exceedingly helpful, if unbeautiful, compositions labelled: "Scene I, a Palace; Scene II, a Forest; Scene III, a Ball-room;" and so-forth to eternal laughter.

No inspiration of this sort, no ready-made basis, has the artist in the Theatre. The comfort (what other word is there?) of such a catalogue is unknown to him. Hungry for accomplishment, his artistic relation to the scenic-painter of yesterday is that of Cezanne to Bouguereau. Backgrounded only by the brief alien tradition of the Russian painters, Golovine, Anisfeld, and Bakst, by Appia's mirages and the lovely, tenuous theories of Craig, he stands alone.

The angles of his craft are without number. He must be a draughtsman, a painter, an expert on furniture and costume. He must possess, at the very heart of his creative impulse, the reverence for light, the ability to utter and formulate that reverence, to make tangible his dreams. If he be a true dramatic artist, he will sacrifice every temptation towards obtrusive glory; he will employ all the means in his power to illustrate the innate meaning of the play, to create a significant, simple background for the players.

To the general public, he is simply heir to an accepted scenic tradition; in the scenic-painter's eye, an unprofessional intruder; in the actor's opinion, a semi-responsible, interfering person; to the manager, a possible business asset; to his fellow-artists of the studio, a lost soul. Extraordinary position! It is necessary to know something of methods of play-production in the average theatre, to understand how extraordinary.

Heretofore, it was customary to allot the various technicalities inherent in the production of the play to as many specialists. These artisans, delighted with their separate orders, unhampered by the bite of an æsthetic conscience, repaired to their respective workshops. There, independently of each other, and with little or no centralized artistic direction, they brought their work to a kind of unrelated completion. This happy philosophy of accident, this largesse of method, had far from happy results. To it we owe the circus-like productions of Shakespeare's plays in England, the orgies of flannel and paper-roses and shaking palaces at the Metropolitan Opera House. This casual system explains the pictorial incoherence of the usual "spectacular productions." In such irresponsibly conceived spectacles as *Henry VIII*, *Chu Chin Chow*, and *Thais*, there can be no harmony of pattern, no balance of design.

Tricked to the scenic-painter's taste, the scenery is designed and painted without sensitive consideration. Consisting usually of badly constructed "flat stuff,"—wings, hanging borders, "cut foliage," and drops,—the distances, "frozen shadows," perspective, details, openings, and even human figures (viz., *Henry VIII*) are smeared upon the flat canvas, in a semi-realistic style. Such scenery knows nothing of God's blue, of living reds and yellows. A heavy colorless brown, impenetrable to light, is the accepted color-standard of the "old scenery." It is interesting to note that most of the scenery hanging in New York theatres to-day is painted in this manner, relic of the gas-lighted stage of the mid-nineteenth century.

When the work is completed, the settings are delivered at the theatre, duly set up, inspected by the stage-manager, and lighted by the electrician with "house" borders and footlights and such crude equipment as the theatre affords. Upon a stage flooded with undirected, unnatural, and utterly unbeautiful light, the florist steps with his flowers, the wig-maker with his handicraft, the shoemaker with his, and the theatrical costumier with his questionable achievements in velvet and satin and imitation-lace. The stage is set, the doors are flung open, and a sophisticated, modern audience, with centuries of traditional beauty and the immortal thirst for dreams behind its eyes, is invited to *look* at the play.

These are the conditions amongst which the artist finds himself, in coming into the Theatre. In the haste, looseness, and compromise of the older methods, he finds very little for the actualizing of his dream. Innumerable prejudices and superstitions must be overcome. He makes his method as he goes.

An experience of my own may illustrate the relation of the artist to the traditional Theatre, the difficulties and discouragements that confront him.

In November of last year I was invited to make designs for a play set in the mid-nineteenth century, and romantic in milieu. The possibilities it offered were delightful. I came to the work with enthusiasm. Less than four weeks were given me for the planning and supervision in execution of three settings and over seventy costumes. The adventure was a race against time only. As the management found it advisable to economize, old scenery was used, repainted.

Now without the artist's personal sense of scale there can be no meaning, no drama, in his design. The arrangement of form—the flowing figures against these forms—is to the artist in

the Theatre what the composition of fixed masses is to the easel-artist. It is the body of his work. Here, then, was the prime asset of the individual artist taken from me. Nor was I able to modify the emptiness of the scenes with color, the scenic-painter, in an exasperation of jealousy, doing his utmost to misunderstand me.

The wreck of my scenes, scaled for "broken color," painted in the smeared, flat technique of the scenic-studio; the fleeting preferences of the leading actress; the intrusion of the manager's opinion; the generally incomplete methods of production, discouraged me. The work gradually slipped out of my hands. The lighting, neglected until the last hysterical moments, was directed chiefly by the manager and the leading actress. Although my name stood responsible for the child's-picture-puzzle results, there was little of my heart or mind in what the curtain rose upon.

Having had no hand in it, what I saw then came to me with all the freshness of revelation. I was amazed—awed. The curtain lifted upon the Underworld. Or so I thought it; for the lights of Hell had been evoked, beyond the dreams of Dante. In one act,—a garden scene, painted for clear sunlight, merging to twilight, and, later in the action, to evening,—all hours of the day were at once assembled. High noon was here, and twilight there, and suddenly and very strangely were intimations of the deepest night. Without apparent discomfort or embarrassment (or because of a dogged resignation imposed on them by many such experiences), the actors passed from an atmospheric yesterday into an equally atmospheric but different to-morrow. They seemed creatures of a vague, watery, and unfamiliar world: a world where the calendar, the clock, and the umbrella were alike superfluous. Across the questionably distant hills and valleys, their shadows swam grotesquely, vibrant and green as huge fish. Behind every wall, or bank, or bush, yellow and blue lights blazed—a hundred little moons and suns.

Here was a *mélange* indeed. From this adventure I learned how new the new really is—how impossible to graft upon the old. The new art demands new artists, new methods, and new conditions. Such tribute as the New York stage-manager of the old school pays it is naively ineffectual. "Overhead lighting," extensively advertised as modern,—as European, in fact,—can no more bring the atmosphere of the masters, Reinhardt and Stanislawsky, to the Belasco Theatre, than it can put the authors of Forty-fourth Street in the category of Andreyeff and Schnitzler.

No more does the extravagance that crowds the stage of the Winter Garden—last echoes of the Russian Ballet—englamour, with the rich and native nakedness of Slavic genius, the nudity of entertainment there.

IV

However, in that he is sincere, the amateur is more dangerous than the charlatan. It has been his cultivated faith that the difficulties of pictorial stagecraft were to be overcome—simply by ignoring them. Fallacy of fallacies!—to intrust to the latencies of a New York, Michigan, or California audience—intensely modern, inexperienced in picturesque imaging—an empty stage! Whatever their race-memories,—whether of Europe or farthest Asia,—can these be conjured into the light by an unadorned drapery?

Rather, with the remote so indefinitely suggested, will the immediate intrude—the strong flavor of the familiar. Can the hanging of linen in folds (with no matter what cunning of stencil or batik) divide the suburbanite from Suburbia?—evoke a faery radiance, a florescence of lost adventure, in minds where before were wall-paper and plumbing, parlors and steam-heat, shouting, bastard religion, and gramophone romance?

The artist sees with the eyes of the multitude. The artist-amateur, in his ungracious arrogance, demands of the multitude the single vision of the artist.

In the fading of its novelty, the studied plainness of the Post-Craigites has lost whatever potency it once possessed. Yesterday's grey curtains can no longer fill a vision newly quickened to behold the colors of the world. The majestic background which Isadora Duncan found sufficient (and it *was* sufficient) has served in turn for *Hamlet* and the chorus-girls of the *Follies*. It still remains for Mr. George M. Cohan to ask that we accept them as the New Jersey setting for one of his farces.

To meet the demand of a nervous age, a day of florid possibilities, the artist must assemble all the resources at hand. The present adventure in the Theatre is not so much the attack on futile, outworn conventions, as their redemption for beauty; the invention, the increasing of possible æsthetic material, and its most effective employment.

There is indeed more to be invented than to destroy. Beyond the compromise of the average playhouse, and the tentative, limited experiments of the Little Theatres, the complex problems of stage-lighting have never been met. Here is an utterly undeveloped science, an untouched æsthetic instrument. Light,

the most flexible of mediums, is still as clumsily handled as if the discovery of electricity, over a century ago, and its subsequent perfection of control, had not made of our forefathers' miracle a daily commonplace. In stage-lighting,—the antique compromises being negligible,—the artist finds no false or exhausted systems to overthrow. He stands upon virgin ground. Everything is potential here. The means at hand are scattered and meagre. To obtain an adequate lighting equipment in almost any New York Theatre it is necessary to design special lamps (which can be made only at great cost), or to compromise with stock models. As yet, methods for light-projection are of the most elementary type. Several excellent models with cylindrical projectors have been perfected, but the demand for them has not justified considerable manufacture. Gelatine "mediums" are procurable only in a very crude scale of dyes. Herein lies the only excuse for the blatancy of stage sunlight, for the acid green which is the stage-manager's moonlight. Limited initially by the arbitrary color-character of manufactured "mediums," the artist has little opportunity for the modifying of light-quality to that subtle point where it becomes neither color nor light, but a mingled intensification of both. So far, the important delicacies of light have been sacrificed to technical deficiency. The very potentiality of stage-lighting, the incompleteness of method, has had a considerable effect upon stage-painting.

To the artist in the Theatre, painting is a foundation only; it is primarily regarded as a surface prepared for the reception of light. The scenery is constructed—spaced and angled—for certain degrees and qualities of light. By this, the form and—above all—the color of the scene is brought to life. In planning the distribution and local intensity of color-masses, the source and color of the lighting which is to be used must be kept constantly in mind.

It is obvious, therefore, that a stage-picture should be as sensitively considered and executed as a water-color drawing. For this, the painstaking flat-painting of the traditional scenic-painter will not suffice. A readier invention, a *current* color-knowledge is needed. Again (and this has marred the work of a certain artist), the indiscriminate use of "stipple painting" does not necessarily produce a brilliant surface. There are possible exquisite subtleties in stage-painting which can be accomplished only by the artist whose ground-work was laid at the easel, whose earlier schoolmasters were Giotto and Dürer, Velasquez and Ingres.

Bringing new life to a jaded craft, he looks upon stage-painting as an art. To his classical schooling he adds the glow, the science, of Monet and the Impressionists, of Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Cezanne. He comes with a close knowledge of his art—of color-meaning and color-science. He comes at the end of a tradition, rich with it, but richer still in the horizon that is before him.

The long tradition of painting is ended. It seems inevitable that, with the passing of the Modernists, the art of painting, as we know it, will become but the memory of a tradition. The conscious complexities of the Modernists cannot truly represent the unconscious complexity of faith and unbelief, the resurgence of hope, which mark the New Age.

The craft of the great masters in painting was largely an inheritance. Each one of them was heir to a definite, limited technique, and dignified in the possession of it. The artist in the Theatre has shed that dignity, although it was his first honor. His equipment includes the Past, but it is the futurity of his technique which indicates his craft's potentiality.

In this futurity, this element of the *possible*, the "New Art of the Theatre"—the newest art—is a portent, a living symbol of the New Age.

V

Possessing an untried instrument, a sacred medium—it is in this that the artist in the Theatre is gifted beyond his mighty forebears in the studio.

It is as if God had confided the ultimate trust to man when he gave him the secret of fire and, through fire, the control of light. Yet man, from the ages of impotence to the modern era of mechanical celerity, has made only comfort out of this trust, this terrible power to darken and illumine, to draw forth color, to obliterate and define. The benison of light has been so easily accepted—the miracle so little worshipped. . . .

Light is the finest of the Elements, the least material, in mystery the nearest to the Soul. Ineffable, penetrating all life, its solemn recession from the Earth at nightfall is like the passing of a Soul. The blue frozen sky is drained of life, and the stars are like the eyes of the dead. All through the night the Earth lies dormant; and men forget their misery and rapture in the half-death of sleep. At morning it flows again over the Earth,—the light, the life,—and men awaken, like bathers rising out of water.

The ebb and flow, the life and death—so simple, so profound in the human consciousness are these symbols and meanings, that there are daily mysteries of light which can bring tears to

the eyes of the most cynical, the most sophisticated amongst men. Ephemeral, vague moments of atmosphere, like the white faces of beloved ghosts, can bring all sorrow through the eyes. Others tremble across the vision of the solitary with the passionate companionship of pleasure. At twilight and in the silence of the increasing dawn the hills are altars to all men.

The secret of the poignant power of light is that its movement, from day to darkness, rhythmic, incessant, is the Timepiece of mortality.

Light and its shadows can fix all atmospheres, all weathers and moods, upon the stage. The assembling of forms, the laying of paint upon those forms, is the artist's beginning only. For now he takes light in his hands, like a God, and carves from darkness Tragedy's face. With light, he lifts from life the brilliant mask of Comedy. He conjures out of emptiness the Seasons, the Hours; the holy frailty of twilight, the sensuous festival of noon. He paints upon paint with light. He is at the heart of color.

Here indeed is a new Theatre—a creed, a priesthood. If he be exalted, patient, and strong, aflame with the desire of his vision, the artist in the Theatre can create a new spiritual landscape for the eyes of the misery-blinded world.

Standing at the margin of the New Age, he links the Past with the Future in the fervor of the creative Present. Therein is his power to shatter the illusion of Time.

Behind him, gleaming into first darkness, is the tradition of the centuries—from silver Babylon and golden Egypt; from Greece, from Rome and purple Venice; from the teeming cities of Europe to America's shores,—the patient gleanings, the building, the treasure.

He will exploit the vastness of the human inheritance. He will glorify the creative impulse in man,—the golden thread binding the ages,—from the day that it woke in the breast of the First Potter. All art, all mortal knowledge and science, are his to unite in that Theatre which is the essential hope of his young craft—the New Theatre of the New Age.

It will be a common Stage, where the gay and the grave—the songs of hillside and tavern, and the ascending prayers of throngs in grey cathedrals—can mingle in an eventual naturalness; a clear Stage, where the thirst and searching of the Race-Dream will find a perfect formation, a solace; a wide Stage, for that Movement which is Life; a concentrated Stage, whereon the quivering Symbol of the Soul can lift, lustrous and free, in light, returned to God.





Six Designs by Adolphe Appia for Act III of *The Valkyrs*. These are chosen to illustrate the two essential bases of Appia's theory of stage decoration: first, that the spirit or atmosphere of the play must be realized, rather than a realistically imitative background; and second, that the actor must dominate the scene.

The scene is the Rock of the Valkyrs. The stage direction is: "To the right the beginning of a forest of fir-trees; to the left the entrance to a cavern; above, the cliffs attain their highest point; toward the background huge rocks are supposed to lead toward a steep abyss." The drawing on this page shows the structure of the scene.



Above, the scene at the rise of the curtain, with four of the Valkyrs on the crags above the cavern. A storm brewing.
Below, the gathering of the Valkyrs in the storm, to the musical accompaniment of the famous "Ride of the Valkyrs."



Above, Wotan appears in the cloud and the Valkyrs cower before him.
Below, the setting as he goes.



The scene at the fall of the curtain. In this notably beautiful rendering of the setting is suggested Appia's dependence upon impressionistic lighting. (The designs are reproduced from the Munich edition of Appia's book, *Die Musik und die Inszenierung*, published by F. Brückmann.)

Comment on Recent Plays

DURING the last weeks of a notably dull season in the New York theatres there were two or three events that helped to redeem the fatuous average established up to the end of February. The most important of these was the Ibsen season inaugurated at the Plymouth Theatre in March, and continued until late in May. Three of the Norwegian master's plays were produced, and two of the presentations must be counted among the best serious offerings on the New York stage in recent years.

The Ibsen Season

BEYOND the merit and interest of the individual productions, it seems to us that Arthur Hopkins has done an extremely important service to the progressive movement by proving that a series of so-called masterpieces can be presented by a more or less permanent company, with frequent change of bill, and with financial success. Critics of the repertory idea, perhaps, will charge that it was only by holding out a star actress as bait that the producer was able to bring crowds to his theatre. But we can excuse the employment of a star for advertising, if she is not allowed to run away with the show. In two of the three productions Nazimova fitted perfectly into the dramatist's picture, and no champion of the ensemble as against the star system could ask for better examples of all-round presentation, free alike from over-emphasis and from exaltation of personalities.

In *The Wild Duck*, if the audience had not known that Nazimova was appearing in the strange-child's part, one would merely have felt satisfied because the producer had found someone to lift this minor rôle to the high level established by those playing the fuller parts. Nazimova made the child unforgettable, but never obtruded her own personality. In *The Doll's House*, usually considered a star's play, she similarly lost herself in the action. *Hedda Gabler*, however, became merely an exhibition of her virtuosity, a strangely personal interpretation of a show character. In just such measure as this exhibition was interesting for its own sake, the play as a whole suffered.

But star or no star, Arthur Hopkins has again shown himself the most daring and the wisest innovator in the professional theatre; he has again proved his talent for stage management of a peculiarly distinguished and rare sort; and he has, we hope, proved to his own satisfaction that a modified repertory system can be made to pay in New York. And—we had almost forgotten the plays in the wider lessons to be learned from their production—he has given America its most thorough and most enjoyable series of Ibsen. That is really important too, in view of the legend of Ibsen's darkness, aloofness and intellectuality. These plays were amusing, absorbing and stirring.

We must add a word about the acting of Lionel Atwell. His impersonations of Hjalmar Ekdal, George Tesman and Torvald Helmer appealed to us as perhaps the best serious characterizations seen in New York this season. At times he failed to divest his acting of the extra, unnecessary flourish—remnant of star training—but in general he was quiet, sincere, and quick to seize the dramatic possibilities of his part, without overdoing it.

At a New Playhouse

HENRY MILLER opened his new theatre in April, and so far the theatre remains more notable than the plays that have been presented there. It is a pleasure merely to sit in this intimate auditorium, with its atmosphere of restfulness and genial warmth. To be sure, we would not build one just like it: the decoration on the curtain is a jarring note, and the carpet design doesn't "belong." But the general design, and particularly the wall separating the auditorium from the foyer, afford a delightful sense of intimacy, and the decoration is at least restrained and generally harmonious. The place is really so many decades ahead of the New York average, that the visitor simply gives himself up to the unaccustomed "feel" of it, and knows that he is in for a pleasant evening even if the play drags.

Into this atmospheric playhouse, Henry Miller has brought two plays, calculated by contrast to show up the faults of both the new and the old styles in (second-rate) playwriting. In the new, as exemplified in Louis Evan Shipman's *The Fountain of Youth*, we found the keener pleasure—as most other critics did not. Here was a play that was frankly artificial, if not hackneyed, in general outline and theme, but which left one with the feeling of having experienced something refreshing and pleasant. The point is that the author substituted a constant play of wit and kindly character-drawing for the usual display of sensational or sentimental incidents—and the public missed the dramatic punch more than it relished the subtler qualities, and soon stopped coming. Of course it would have been better if the subtle and the dynamic virtues had been combined—but then we should have had the long-awaited great American playwright, and the play would have been done by an obscure amateur company in the provinces.

A Marriage of Convenience exhibited faults and virtues of a different sort. Billie Burke was pretty and sweet, and made one remember the days when she first starred as the innocent, girlish sweetheart of hero and audience alike. Henry Miller was a sympathetic lover, and there was a pleasantly romantic atmosphere over the whole affair. But after all, it was thin entertainment in many spots, and left little to think about afterward—unless it was some atrociously mannered and out-of-date acting.

Really, Mr. Miller should have given such a charming theatre better plays than these.

**The Kennedy Season**

CHARLES RANN KENNEDY is the most important dramatist writing in America to-day, and perhaps the least popular—at least of those who get their plays produced on Broadway. His new play *The Army With Banners* and his famous *The Servant in the House* were shown at the French Theatre in April, and both were withdrawn after brief runs.

Perhaps our taste is as overspecialized—yes, we admit it: "highbrow"—as that of fiction readers who prefer Meredith to Robert Chambers and Harold Bell Wright. We enjoyed *The Army With Banners*, and would gladly have suffered a second attendance at it, if the end had not come so soon. Dramatically the play was somewhat incoherent, there were exceedingly long dull streaks, and the comic relief was badly set in. But there were passages and episodes so stimulating, and sudden instigations to look down corridors of thought so seldom lighted, and a general intellectual tone so brilliant, that at the end the faults were forgotten in the exhilaration of a rare mental experience. Incidentally one may add that the play contained,



in the thinly disguised portrait of Billy Sunday, a scathing caricature unequalled in American stage history. The Kaiser, or rather something representing "nationality," was there too, in less recognizable form; and many another vice of modern civilization.

The Servant in the House was substituted when the newer play failed to please, and was well staged and capably acted in general. The production confirmed our opinion that this is one of the best plays in the whole range of modern English drama, and one which should appear on our stage for a few weeks every year or two.

Charles Rann Kennedy writes for an audience that is still limited in numbers; but the pleasure these two plays afforded us suggests again that the system which tends to limit the New York stage to dramatic best-sellers is all wrong—that there should be a theatre catering to the small audience that is specialized in intelligence, that likes intellectual drama or æsthetic drama better than the popular journalistic play.

**The Isadorable
Duncans**

SPEAKING of what is æsthetic reminds us that the Isadora Duncan dancers have been appearing at the Neighborhood Playhouse and at Carnegie Hall. In the performances of these dancing girls we have experienced the highest æsthetic pleasure, the rarest delight, that has come to us in the entire year. In the dancing of Anna Duncan we have found a living sculpturesque beauty that suggests a new and glorious widening of the arts of the theatre, and a more complete union of the lyric and plastic arts. From the youthful and flower-like Liesa we have caught a different but no less genuine thrill. But one must see them dance to know what we wish to say. Like music, their art is indescribable—and their appeal to our senses similarly irresistible.

**At the Actors'
and Authors'**

WE did not see the first production by the new Actors' and Authors' Theatre; but when a bill of four one-act plays was announced we went with keen curiosity to know what these Broadway professionals would accomplish when they attempted the "little theatre stunt." If we had left the theatre when the program was half finished—and there were those who did, gloomily—we should have said that this was the most hopeless exhibition of half-baked experimentation that we had seen this year; and we have been at practically every amateur playhouse in New York during the season.

The first play was an intimate bit of English dialect comedy. Despite Whitford Kane's effective interpretation, the other players queered the production by bringing their restless acting to parts that demanded merely sympathy, sincerity and quiet understanding. Sam Hume's semi-amateur group in Detroit could have done the piece justice, and many another little theatre could do it acceptably—but these professionals merely reminded one of a pretty good instrument badly out of tune.

We had been told that the second play on the bill, a musical thing called *Art's Rejuvenation*, would interest us especially, being really Artistic. We had our doubts right then; but the event was worse than anything one could anticipate. It was, dramatically, just what the commercial artist turns out when the boss tells him to cut loose and give 'em art. It was a symbolic story about Art's coming to life again, under the ministrations of Sculpture, Painting, etc. But if Art has really come to that pass, we hope he will die, swiftly and beyond hope of resuscitation. Mediocre, crass, utterly false!

Thus far on the program only melancholy, somewhat tempered by amusement at the outrageous stupidity of doing such things in public.

Then followed two plays so enjoyable that one forgot one's resentment: two productions so good that one wonders how producers wise enough to

choose them could have been stupid enough to present the other things on the same bill. It was perhaps Minnie Dupree's remarkable acting that lifted *Nocturne* out of the class of dangerously sentimental comedy. In her hands the play became an absorbing and appealing bit of romantic story-telling. The last play on the bill was an immensely diverting bit of foolishness, satirizing the writers of best-seller novels. Edith Taliaferro contributed some unusually good acting, and the rest of the cast was capable. The production was just the sort of light material which the Washington Square Players should have given us in place of the vapid burlesque "fillers" so often seen at the Comedy Theatre.

If the Actors' and Authors' Theatre lives up to its best experience it will become a valuable link in the chain of experimental companies which is being forged from coast to coast. If it lives down to its worst offerings it ought to die instantly. Our best wishes are with it—and despite that terrible Art thing on its second program, we do believe in its future.

The Farewell at the Comedy THE Washington Square Players by no means went out in a blaze of glory. Their record would have been better if they had suspended in the winter, when they were doing really interesting things, instead of after the production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and their final bill of one-act plays. These left much to be desired in both acting and mounting; and the production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Salome* on succeeding programs suggests an unfortunate last-minute effort to attract the public through sensationalism.

Mrs. Warren's Profession suffered merely through mediocre standards of production. Even Mary Shaw seemed only partially convincing. The play still stands as one of the many worth-while things which New York has yet to see under proper conditions.

On the final program of the season *Salome* was the only outstanding feature. The production was thoroughly incompetent. There was no unity: Rollo Peters and Gareth Hughes opened in one key, Mme. Yorska played in another, Louis Calvert added another (still worse), and Helen Westley put a final touch of vulgarity on the whole thing. Walter Hampden was well above the average, but it was Rollo Peters who carried away the honors of the evening. The thing that interested us most about the production was the ease with which this amateur player showed up, by means of his beautiful voice modulation and the sincerity and quietness of his acting, the artificiality and lack of understanding of his more professional fellow-actors. It makes one hope that when the time comes for a real art theatre in this country it may be able to recruit a company of artist-actors able to render poetic drama poetically.

The future of the project that was the Washington Square Players is not promising. Doubtless the fine spirit that was behind the venture in the beginning will blossom again, and we trust under more favorable conditions, when peace releases Ralph Roeder, Edward Goodman and the many others who have been called away by the war. In the meantime a vaudeville firm, Lewis and Gordon, have bought the effects and name of the organization, and employed enough of the company to make their claim of being successor to the original group plausible to the general public. Their announcement, however, leaves grave doubts as to the value, other than commercial, of what may be done in the Players' name hereafter. In reality the Washington Square group is now only a memory; their valuable experimental work—and there was much of it at times—is a matter of theatrical history; and their mistakes should be, from this time on, lost to record except as they may serve to show new experimental groups what to avoid.



In Sam Hume's production of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, reported at some length in our Spring issue, the characters playing the Seven Deadly Sins wore masks designed by Katherine McEwen. Two of the masked figures are shown on this and the following page. The one above is *Pride*.



Masked figure of *Covetousness*. Mask designed by Katherine McEwen.



Sketches of Oriental Theatres

By HERMANN ROSSE

FLARING drapery of smaragd, of light vermillion and magenta. Flags and feathers flaming in a battle of primary colors, goaded to stinging by black and gold and shining mirrors.

An orgy of sound and color and shining lights, which dazes.

Now and then a passage of color or a change in rhythm, which dominates.

Symbolic grime, symbolic costume, scenery, music ; symbolic everything.

A theatre in Shanghai.

A shining floor reflecting wonders of sculptured masks, of brocades and jewelry. A sacristy displayed with measured formality in cadenced motion. A high mass of beauty.

The *Nō*.

Outside, signs like Florentine banners, which flap in the sun. Inside, an audience sipping tea. A day grown gradually old over a waxing crowd. A haze of twilight, half hiding expectant faces turned toward a vision of peacock splendor, approaching on the flower walk. Her court dress trailing, slowly moving her fan of gold and flowers, past blue and black brocades and purple and red gold. A lacquered face in a setting of jet black. A crown of golden combs. My Yeizan prints come true.

The *Kabuki*.

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The salient characteristic of the oriental theatre is that the ceremonial, the ritual part, in the East is more obvious than with us.

The measured steps of the Japanese *Nō* player and the Javanese *Wajang Wong* actor, and the straightforward way in which their musicians become part of the performance, suggest the religious ceremony.

The Chinese stage, with its scenery of screens, its embroideries to indicate a city, its mysterious, dazzling color, its fascinating music and rhythmic movements, suggests the Japanese *Nō*, the old Japanese aristocratic play, which once seen is never again forgotten.

In the *Nō* every movement is part of a perfectly designed unit ; traditional it may be, but transportingly beautiful.

Actors with the most beautiful masks of lacquered wood and costumes of rare silken brocades, of symbolic color and pattern, move about on a shiny polished floor. With rhythmic gestures of the fan they stand before a simple background of planks resembling cedar wood, reddened and dulled by age and decorated with an old, old pine tree in sombre greens and black.

Sometimes the actors mark time with their feet, executing prescribed paces on the hollow resonant stage, while the choir chants sympathetic strophes or verbally describes the scenery, trusting the audience to use its imagination.

They come and go like sculptured gods, the mysterious, golden shapes on their big, patterned robes of state reflected in the floor. A golden ornament here and there, an occasional golden fan balanced by thin vermilion cords and tassels, black wigs and narrow strips of pitch-black girdle; while in the costumes themselves greys and blues and greens and faded apricot dominate the scheme.

Actors and audience are both under cover, but they are separated from each other by a narrow strip of open-air space, which allows the light to come in above, and offers a place for growing the traditional small pine trees below. The green-room is connected with the stage by a gallery, which runs at an angle of about seventy degrees away from the audience, which is seated on three sides of the stage. Stage and gallery are on the same level; they are horizontal and are raised three feet or so above the level of the auditorium. Like the European operatic orchestra, the stage has a sound-chamber underneath.

Performances of this kind certify to one's mind that, whatever success the other types of theatre may attain, the ultra-stylistic, rhythmic-symbolical will always have its strong appeal. A forest in the Nô is indicated by a branch, a horse by a gesture. How much more satisfactory artistically it is to have some splendidly trained, gorgeously dressed individual slowly emerge from the green-room, turn his masked head and mount his imaginary horse, to dismount again in equally symbolic way after crossing the bridge to the stage, than the spectacular Western manager's ex-cavalry horses lumbering through some Tudor tilting match!

The Nô has several principles in common with the string-band concert, and in its equipment and solemn ritual it resembles the Roman high mass, with the same sculpturesque dress, the same richness of materials and symbolism of properties. The mood of the spectators also is a compromise between the devotion of the churchgoer and the intellectual and emotional pleasure of the concert auditor.

Instead of the symbolic pine tree painted so finely on the plain cedar boards, we have to be content in our concert halls with the inevitable badly-drawn lyre. The band is in sight, in full dress, as the Japanese; but whereas acting of our singers is rather uncommon, as is the change of costume, there is in the Nō performance a conscious trying after certain symbolic dramatic effects. There also is a timid attempt in the Nō to indicate change of time and location in the stage properties, the costumes, masks, and so on. The absence of drop-curtains on both stages creates a certain intimacy between stage and auditorium.



One day when I was walking in Tokio I suddenly came across it. I had often heard about a type of drama which resembled the Nō but which was only used on special festive occasions, acted on a movable stage, the company travelling from place to place. And here it was, for all the world like a giant punch-and-judy show. It did not take long to find out how really beautiful it was. It had not the full dignity of the Nō with its antique brocades and golden ornaments, with the patina of age. It all looked fresh and new, but more varied, more fantastic in design, more vital.

Beautiful but evil maidens changed into foxes, and valiant young men fought with monsters. The costumes were beautiful, the actors wore masks, and a great point was made of the pageant-like element in the drama of dragons, beasts and gods.

While looking at these fine, bold patterns in strong colors and these brightly lacquered masks and shining armor and jewelry, I wondered whether the Nō did not look much more like this when the costumes and masks had just left the artist's studio, and the trees were freshly painted on the background: whether this stage had not kept all the vitality of the Nō, from before the revolution; and a faint suspicion arose of the Nō dying a slow but certain death under the hands of the pseudo-mediaevalist, "antiquing" everything that was not old, with smoke and dust and syrupy varnish.

EDITOR'S NOTE.— These sketches are the first of a series that will be continued in later issues of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE. The author is a Dutch artist who has travelled extensively, studying the theatres of all countries, and who has lived for several years past in California. Several of his drawings have already appeared in this Magazine.

The Little Theatre and the Small Town

By R. CLYDE FORD

SOME thirty miles out of Detroit is Ypsilanti, a little town with a big name, which has been much abused in these latter days by various decadent vaudeville artists who have found in its mellifluous vocable a relief from the overworked notoriety of Yaphank, Oshkosh and Kalamazoo. Although Ypsilanti is on a semi-transcontinental railroad and not far from a great metropolis it has not yet got beyond a certain aloofness and domesticity in the world, as attest its bare eight thousand people, fine old trees, quaint home-like houses, and ample yards and gardens.

Not many new ideas come to leaven existence in such a town—the traditions are all against it; but now and then one does get through the quarantine and create some little havoc or excitement before its adventurous course is stayed. To illustrate: Three years ago an idea of real importance, the "little-theatre idea," took shape in Ypsilanti, and now bids fair to live on in a career of distinct achievement. It already has served to enrich the life of a community, and it is bringing many individuals into a new contact with the arts.

Early in 1915 D. L. Quirk, Jr., after discussion with various friends, called a council of twenty-five persons who might be interested in an amateur players' club. Out of this meeting sprang the "Ypsilanti Players," an organization with hardly any visible governmental machinery outside a few responsible committees, but having in Mr. Quirk an art-lover who is at once a Mæcenias and a director, with an unfailing, contagious gift of enthusiasm. Through the remainder of 1915 the club held its meetings in the Ladies' Literary Club House, but the cramped quarters and insufficient stage speedily induced a feeling of unrest, which culminated in a plan to lease, with the privilege of buying, an abandoned barn in the rear of the Ladies' Library Building, and transform it into a little theatre. On March 7, 1916, the new playhouse was formally opened to the public with a masque entitled "Playing the Favorites," written and arranged by Laura G. Smith, a member of the Players. From this date of their hegira the Ypsilanti Players reckon time.

For two years now the Players have been under their own roof-tree, and in this time they have found themselves in the real soul of their work. From the beginning they have been humble enough not to cherish any illusions about the fields which they

proposed to invade. The call under which they were organized announced simply that their aim was "to study, read, and act new plays of artistic merit." But during the first year, when the club was in rented quarters, its meetings were semi-informal and somewhat diffuse in character, with a resultant of pleasant evenings and not much artistic accomplishment.

In the new playhouse, however, with its adequate stage, lighting, and properties, everybody felt instinctively that the play-actor's art was a more serious thing, and performance was lifted to a new and higher level almost at once. Each member of the club tried, in some way, to live up to the dignity of his new clothes. Attention was centered exclusively on one-act plays; programs were planned with an eye to artistic balance and proportion; rehearsals were undertaken with a stern desire to work out an interpretation of lines and parts, and out of this came a delicious argot of the stage redolent of "tempo," "business," "make-up," and "props."

On May 16, 1916, a series of three open nights for the general public was inaugurated, with a program sufficiently strong to attract a capacity house at a dollar a ticket. In the preface of the announcement distributed on this occasion the Players spoke of themselves and their work as follows:

"The Ypsilanti Players are a group of people who have been drawn together by a common interest in modern drama.

"We do not presume to be actors or artists—yet, outside of a fair measure of zeal and enthusiasm. But we have ambitions—our Playhouse proves that—and the field before us is wide and fertile enough to call forth our best efforts. We have no hobbies to ride, no prejudices to exploit. 'The play is the thing,' and we shall take it wherever we can find it, abroad or at home. We count ourselves bold enough to try out a production by one of our own members even, provided it has the divine spark in it!

"The program for this series of public evenings is presented with no apologies. We have so much fun by ourselves that we want our friends to get a glimpse of us at our best. May you enjoy the performance as much as we do."

The plays given on this occasion, *The Aliens* by Charles Hanson Towne, *The Man on the Kerb* by Alfred Sutro, *The Traitor* by Percival Wilde, and *The Workhouse Ward* by Lady Gregory, and the favorable comment evoked from press and public, showed that the Players were in a fair way to realize their ambitions.

The Players have felt from the beginning of their existence that any little playhouse which fulfilled its true mission in a

community ought to take the lead in directing public taste and amusement in a sane and educative way. They were able to do something in this direction by securing Stuart Walker and his Portmanteau Theatre for a winter date in the Peace Auditorium at the Normal College. Probably no similar event in years elicited so much commendation on every hand as this thoroughly enjoyable dramatic evening.

The activities of the second year of the playhouse showed yet more improvement in repertory and performance, and news that stray guests from the professional stage were bestowing now and then a word of flattering approval and praise served only to whet the interest of the public to a sharper edge. When it came time for the annual open nights a modest advertisement in a local paper was sufficient more than to sell out the house.

The playhouse, as originally acquired, was a basement barn 18 x 24 feet. Of this space twelve feet was devoted to stage, twelve feet to audience room. To increase the seating capacity, a balcony holding eighteen seats was swung out from the end of the building, "a haymow transformed into a gallery," as Mrs. Coburn of the Coburn Players graphically put it. Fifty people can be comfortably accommodated in the chairs upstairs and down.

The stage was at the start 12 x 18 feet, with a proscenium arch 9 x 15; but the depth has been doubled by a recent extension of the building. Opening off the middle of the stage, a stairway descends to the basement where are two large dressing-rooms, a furnace-room, and a green-room, which is also a kitchenette with running water, electric stove, table, etc. Mention of the electric stove suggests one of the cosiest customs of the club—the lunch which comes every play night after the last echo of applause has died away and the curtain is drawn for good. A big table is spread with tempting things to eat in the very own dishes of the playhouse, and steaming coffee, tea and chocolate are brought up from the hot plate below. Then everybody, saint and sinner, clown and villain, demure maid and sedate dame, as the cast demands, "makes a long arm and leans to" in that very pretty and effective little play of eating, which requires no rehearsal and no prompting.

While the players would not want to claim that they are maintaining an art theatre, as that term is technically understood, still they have not lost sight of the artistic in the mission of their little playhouse. They are particularly fortunate in having as members Miss Bertha Goodison and Miss Elinor Strafer of the art

department of the State Normal College, who are both enthusiastic devotees of art and stagecraft. The decoration of the playhouse, inside and out, has been done largely under their direction and supervision—and not supervision only, for they have actually had their hands in it, as witness sundry paint pails, washes, color mixtures and bespattered aprons and coats.

As one descends the gentle slope to the theatre from the higher level of the street, one is struck by the bright, cheery color of the building and the gaily lettered sign "Playhouse." The quaint bent-iron lantern swinging over the entrance shows the way inside where admiration really begins. The original rafters, studding, and other beamwork of the barn have been effectively utilized and are painted a soft green, with the high lights in Pompeian red. The side walls carry out the same color scheme—Pompeian red against a putty-colored background. One side has a center panel with a heraldic emblem featuring a cock in dark blues and greens. Above the arch of the stage is the same device, with the cock's head in the form of a crest, and on the shield beneath are the letters "Y P", standing for "Ypsilanti Players." A reproduction of this monogram is used to adorn all the club's letterheads, programs, and announcements. The balcony railing is hung with oriental draperies of bright colors. The curtains are of putty-colored monk's cloth, with wide vertical stripes of dark green denim and narrower stripes of Pompeian red brocade. When lighted from the two bent-iron lanterns suspended from the ceiling the effect of the audience room is strikingly complete.

The stage is better equipped than that of many a more pretentious big-city playhouse. In fact, one rapturous critic has said it has the most up-to-date lighting effects west of the Alleghanies. There are no footlights, but rows of reflecting border lights are cleverly concealed around the arch of the stage. All of the lights and color effects are regulated from a central switchboard and controlled by dimmers of latest make. It is divulging no secret to say that the electrical equipment alone has cost about two thousand dollars.

At the present time the playhouse possesses several complete stage "sets," all of which are largely the handiwork of the Players themselves under the direction of Mr. Quirk and Miss Goodison. Four large pylons with stippled surfaces, a flat, three broad steps, and a sky-dome, complete the accessories. Some of the panoramic backgrounds which have been produced here have been highly commended by visiting critics.

The story of the Ypsilanti Players would not be complete without some mention of ways and means; for underneath all the fun and frolic of private programs and open nights is the persistent question of finance, which so many community playhouses have never solved successfully. To begin with, the club numbers on an average thirty members, with annual dues of five dollars per member. This gives a yearly working capital of one hundred and fifty dollars, which is further increased to two hundred and fifty dollars by the proceeds of the regular open nights. During the season of 1917-18 the privilege of attending the programs has been sold to so-called "subscription members." This brings in an additional two hundred dollars, which, however, is set aside for stage settings, costumes and equipment. At the last fiscal report a debt of eight hundred dollars only rested upon the playhouse. While this will be increased somewhat this year by recent building additions, it is safe to say that whatever incumbrance there is will be reduced annually by two hundred dollars. At the present writing the credit of the Players is A No. 1.

Considered from every angle, it is evident that the Players were organized under a lucky star. Mr. Quirk, to whose energy and enthusiasm the club owed its inception, is still prime mover in all its activities, and he forms, as it were, a sort of link between it in its community enterprise and the great world outside. He has generously put at the disposal of the play committee of the club his dramatic library, which receives regularly all the new plays as they appear; and, as one of the directors of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Detroit, he has been able to bring home with him the sympathetic interest of Mr. Sam Hume, and of the whole staff of workers connected with that remarkable organization.

Most of the history of the Ypsilanti Players, let us hope, remains yet to be written. It will contain, no doubt, the record of local pageants, original plays, discovery of stars, trips "on the road," promotion of a new community taste in many ways; in short, the doing of a lot of things very much worth while in elaboration of a new small-town idea. At least, such is the purpose.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—We are publishing this article because the Ypsilanti Playhouse is unique and yet typical of what the little theatre means, or might mean, civically to towns throughout the country. Our series of essays about experimental theatres has dealt largely with those which are seeking to develop a new technique of production or a new and native dramatic expression—such as the Chicago Little Theatre, the Wisconsin Players and the Greenleaf Theatre. We are glad to reflect another aspect of the non-commercial theatre's importance, through this article which suggests its influence on small-town community life.



Three puppets from Tony Sarg's production of *The Green Suit*. Hamilton Williamson, who wrote the following article about Mr. Sarg's work, is also author of two of the plays in which the puppets were seen, *The Green Suit* and *A Stolen Beauty and the Great Jewel*.



Two scenes from *A Stolen Beauty and the Great Jewel*, as acted by Tony Sarg's puppets.

Tony Sarg's Marionettes

By HAMILTON WILLIAMSON

LAST January four hundred children were the privileged first audience at Mr. Tony Sarg's puppet performance at the Neighborhood Playhouse. They came from the Neighborhood House, and Mr. Sarg invited them at the suggestion of the Misses Lewisohn, who promised him an outspoken if tempestuous judgment. Next December he will try out his puppet production of Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* before the same cruelly candid audience.

In January the program was made up of three fairy tales, *The Three Wishes*, *The Green Suit*, and *A Stolen Beauty and the Great Jewel*. The "puppeteers," who controlled the dolls, and the actors, who spoke the lines, had been warned that the waifs they were to entertain had not been impressed by the announcement that they were to witness the revival and elaboration of one of the world's oldest arts. They were told that Mr. Sarg's daring color schemes, his accords and near discords would leave these children quite untouched. They must be held by the movement in the figures and the tension in the lines, or they would wreck the performance. When bored it was their habit to state the fact at the top of their lungs.

The youngsters arrived. They did not filter in like ordinary spectators, but streamed in by hundreds. They came shouting and laughing as though to a playground. Here and there the boys started friendly wrestling matches. From the stage the performers peeped out fearfully. They were prepared to please an audience—but how please pandemonium?

The curtains parted on a wood scene. A rabbit twitched his ear. A bird sang, and several butterflies fluttered across the stage. This was all that was needed to put the children under a spell which broke only when the curtains closed. Then the voices rang out louder and higher than before. When the last act of the last play was over, there was a shout of "Is that all?" One little girl begged to stay just in case it mightn't be. Miss Lewisohn and Miss Arthur assured Mr. Sarg that as long as his puppets played, all children would be with him.

The next day, at an evening performance, the house was filled entirely with grown-ups. In the back row there was a heated argument as to whether a child could really appreciate this super-toy. The defender of children as an audience admitted grudging-

ingly that perhaps no one under sixteen could catch the mocking humor in such realistic near-humans. "But," he insisted, "a child will project his own humanity into a puppet and will generously overlook a score of strings."

Six years ago, in London, Tony Sarg began his work with marionettes. He made them in his hours of recreation, and showed them only to his most intimate friends. At that time his studio was "The Old Curiosity Shop" of Dickens. Here a circle gathered for the express purpose of playing with puppets. With the enthusiasm of a sailor teaching a parrot to swear, men of letters improvised lines on the spot. The dolls gesticulated furiously, and spouted bold ideas too advanced for cautious publishers, and bits of wit too mellow for the drawing-room.

These early puppets were from seven to eight inches high, and were operated on a stage only three feet wide. The back drop was often repainted in a day, and quick changes in illumination were effected by a small set of electric lights.

There are marionette plays to be found in a dozen different languages, but in no language is there a treatise of value on the solution of the mechanical difficulties in puppetry. The vaudeville puppet showman has an annoying habit of keeping his devices a secret. During his act he shuts off the performance from the wings by an erection of canvas screens.

So it was every man for himself. Before Mr. Sarg could become an artist-producer of puppet plays, he was first an inventor working amidst a clutter of rejected arms and legs. His dolls have constantly grown in complexity as their movements have advanced in realism. The simplest of them now requires both hands for its manipulation, and with the more complicated type the operator holds strings between his teeth and pulls them by moving his head. In the cast of last winter there were four figures so elaborately jointed that two operators were assigned to each.

The limit of endurance and muscular strength was tried out in the management of the elephant, one of the stars in the oriental play. This beast also put to the test the stoutness of black string. He was operated by Miss Lillian Owen, who lovingly built him from wire and cloth.

In one respect the elephant is a happy contrast to all other marionettes. In moments of rest he can bear his weight on his own substantial legs. With the ordinary man-like puppet, though the feet touch the stage, it is merely a matter of contact; the strain is always borne from above. One of the most difficult things a "puppeteer" has to learn is the sensing of feet just



touching and no more. In the hands of a beginner the puppets are seen delicately stepping on air or doubling up from their own weight.

Tony Sarg's dolls are a triumph of characterization. Perhaps it is fairer to say over-characterization. All that facial movement ordinarily portrays is, as far as possible, concentrated in the one expression which the puppet must wear through the play.

This was most successfully accomplished in the case of the wicked uncle in *The Green Suit*. His narrow forehead, his protruding eyes of watery blue, his hanging jowl and small, firm mouth, marked him as a man of stupid and obstinate greed, who was destined to come to no good end. When he wagged his head and shook his cane at little Peter, his face no longer seemed immobile but a thing of life and venom.

The expression of the oriental dancer was a smug consciousness of personal charm. While she could never vary this look she really never needed to, for the applause of the audience justified her vanity.

The Sarg puppet-makers are now occupied with *The Rose and the Ring*. Certainly "Michael Angelo Titmarsh" had marionettes in the back of his head when he wrote it. The characters are not people—they are puppets; and his illustrations are so like puppets that just as he drew them Miss Lillian Owen will create them.

The appropriateness of marionettes as a medium for Thackeray's satire was suggested by Mr. Winthrop Ames. He decided, however, after a careful rereading of *The Rose and the Ring* that this was too complex in structure to be available. But Mr. Sarg's enthusiasm feeds upon complexities, and Prince Giglio and Prince Bulbo are to step from the page in the three-dimensional form.

The tale is full of the most delightful opportunities for puppets. "For the Fairy Blackstick coming to call upon the Prince and Princess, who were actually sitting at the open drawing-room window, Gruffanuff not only denied them, but made the most odious vulgar sign as he was going to slam the door in the Fairy's face." But the door is never slammed and Gruffanuff is flattened against it, and becomes a brass knocker, his arms over his head and his legs twisted under him. The very stuff of which puppet plays are made! With just the merest touch of thunder and lightning the transformation will be accomplished.

And, "Great, fierce, red-maned, black-throated, long-tailed, roaring, bellowing, rushing lions were loosed to eat Rosalba, but instead of devouring her they nuzzled their noses in her lap and moo'd."

We who last winter delighted in the barking of the woolly dog in *The Three Wishes* are looking forward to the roaring and bellowing of two rushing lions, and are certain we shall love them when they moo. We are confident that Rosalba's journey to join her lover, riding these fond lions turn and turn about, will offer no unsolvable difficulties.

There will be a scaffold and an eleventh-hour rescue—a drawing-room scene with a singer and a pianist; and, best of all, two armored knights in splendid combat. The knights will not be marionettes but shadowgraph figures operated with sticks from below, in Javanese fashion.

Miss Louise Mick is putting this "Fireside Pantomime for Great and Small Children" into dramatic form. She is compacting its loose construction and gathering its countless incidents into nine scenes. Writing for puppets has its own peculiar technique. This Miss Mick thoroughly mastered during the period of her successful work with the puppets of the Chicago Little Theatre.

It is probable that the coming production will not follow its predecessor which, after its success on Grand Street, was moved to the Norworth Theatre, and from there to the Punch and Judy Theatre. The proscenium arch of the new puppet stage will be but four feet by eight as against the eight feet by twelve of the proscenium arch in last season's production. The performance will be *intime*, and suited rather to very small theatres than to Broadway. The fourteen characters will be played by dolls not more than two feet high.

Perhaps the smallest Sarg puppet which will be shown in New York is a walking carrot. This is one of the three characters which Mr. Belasco uses in the marionette incident in his new play *Over the Hills*. The carrot's legs and arms are delicate white roots, and when the rabbit isn't looking, a head bobs up from below the green carrot top. The third puppet is a fairy.

The unique feature of these puppets is the length of string used. The bridge on which the operators stand is fifteen feet from the stage. Since the fairy is a hanging figure, the added yards of string add grace to her movements; but in the case of the rabbit and the carrot they increase tenfold the puppeteers' greatest dread, the fatal swing. Once let the carrot strike, by accident, a bit of stage furniture, and a pendulum movement is set up which it is almost impossible to control.

In the past Mr. Sarg's energy has been electric in vitalizing an ancient art. All those who saw the fruition of his earlier experiments will eagerly await his further efforts.





Five Settings by J. Blanding Sloan. Above is a scene from *Pierrot in the Clear of the Moon*, as produced by Mr. Sloan at the Players' Workshop in Chicago.





Above is a scene from *Mrs. Margaret Calhoun*, by Ben Hecht and Maxwell Bodenheim, as designed by J. Blanding Sloan for the Players' Workshop in Chicago. "The authors gave human form to the phrases of a love-letter and these pale greenish silhouettes were caused to appear behind a translucent drop, painted to represent a huge envelope, and finally to issue from the torn end, to play out their brief and sordid tragedy in the dim land down-stage."

On the page opposite are settings for Wedekind's *Such Is Life* and Fulda's *The Pirate*, as designed by J. Blanding Sloan for George Foster Platt's productions in Milwaukee.



Scene from Gretchen Riggs' fantasy, *The Myth of the Mirror*, as produced at the Players' Workshop. Setting by J. Blanding Sloan.



The Scenic Art of J. Blanding Sloan

By MICHAEL CARRMICHAEL CARR

J. BLANDING SLOAN is one of the new-theatre artists. This does not mean necessarily that he is an exponent of all that is termed *new* in the theatre. As Strindberg said, "There are crimes and crimes." The work of Sloan in the realm of the theatre, as that of every other theatre artist, must be judged as Shakespeare is judged. The prefixing of the word *new* before a certain type of stage setting does not make it good, nor, as a number of Philistines wish, utterly bad. It merely lures the critic into vagueness because the type involved entered its present form eighteen years ago. The fact that America only discovered it in *Sumurun*, does not affect its age.

It is embarrassing to write an appreciation of the art of one man, hanging on individual variations as it must, when the writer feels that the whole art, of which his subject forms but a part, is so imperfectly understood. By far the greatest amount of stage settings that the world has seen from the savage drama and the Greeks to the present day, has been of an abstract, non-realistic character. The average knowledge of theatrical art covers fifty years and but one country. It is the narrowness of the critic's view coupled with his limited education which injects false issues into dramatic criticism. The following aphorisms may tend to clarify my point. The neolithic savages of Australia were followers of Gordon Craig, using a highly developed abstract setting. The Greek set was formal, in spite of all that Mid-Victorianism could do. Gordon Craig did not invent screens, as they were used in Europe in the masques of Inigo Jones. A number of the "New Sets" have been lifted bodily from comparatively old paintings. It is foolish to rail against the art of Belasco. He has never been interested in art. Art and Commerce are two separate activities.

When the war is over, and the theatre is enjoying new vogues and the critics inventing new slogans, the art of Mr. Sloan will still be vital because it is art. Certain of our young theatre moderns will be forgotten because their work has never risen above clever imitation. The present writer had the good fortune to be connected with the renaissance of theatre art in London in '99-'03 and later in Florence in '08. Imagine, then, his surprise, when in '11 and '12 there appeared in America so many "New Sets" which he first took to be rather weak examples of Gordon Craig.

Had Craig invented a new form or discovered a fourth dimension and imposed it on art for all time, this would have been a normal state of affairs. It speaks much for Craig's influence and little for our own personality that so much of our recent stage setting would pass anywhere in Europe as Craig in an off moment.

Mr. Sloan has not mistaken technique for art as the Germans did, in their attempt to lift Craig's Celtic imagination on to the stage of the Deutsches Theater. Neither has he studied scene painting in the literal sense of the word. Scene painting and sign painting are, like rag-time, questions of technique and have but little connection with the æsthetic. It was in the search for a more vital message, for a larger field of expression that Sloan passed over from a painter of pictures to one of mental environment. For such is the goal, whether realized or only dimly sensed, of every artist of the theatre. And just as every artistic advance is born of the effort to make something better rather than something novel, it is in the former, rather than in the latter quality that we shall sense the fineness of Mr. Sloan's work. In the same sense that the Renaissance was born in Italy we may say that Blanding Sloan's stage art was born in the Players' Workshop of Chicago, which was so bravely launched and ably managed by Miss Elizabeth Bingham. It was here that the set for *Brown* by Maxwell Bodenheim, which was reproduced in Vol. I No. 1 of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE, was made. The set for *Brown* (readers will remember the simplicity of the cloud design) was at the same time Mr. Sloan's first essay in stage decoration and his first triumph.

Whenever one meets an old art in a new form or a new artist in a known medium one is impelled to the silly task of labeling him. At school, the ages and the dynasties are handed us ready ticketed. Before we are really capable of thinking, the schools of thought are ours, each in its prim pigeon-hole. And so with the painters and the poets. Alas, that the tyranny of the specialized machine should carry over into the field of art, and cause this painter to go in for moonlights and that one to affect the nude! In the topsy-turvy land of the stage this sort of art specialization becomes more than childish. Irving made all his productions literal and didactic; George Alexander only posed the suave; everything Tree did was stupendous and costly; and all this the result of a fixed policy, an attitude toward their art that existed quite apart from the varied type of play they might stage.

It may be felt as perilously easy and slightly unfair to mock the older men for the inevitable crystallization that sets in when



the prosaic cape of the fortieth year has been rounded, but we have only to look at our young men for the same signs. Some decorators make a chic Louis XVI hit, and ever after manage to obtrude its classic note—if necessary, into the Romanesque of Maeterlinck! Some specialize in the grotesque, and we can fancy the throes of their art in mounting Shaw. Others are so wedded to pure color that all must give way before their passion. Just because a screaming peacock on a marble terrace gives the senses a delicious twinge, is no reason for repeating it in the farm-yard, the garage and the church. But so long as the artists strive at their patterns, so long will their critics work to snare their art in a phase and throw it, on a red tag, to the expectant public.

The first of the Sloan settings that I saw was that of *Pierrot in the Clear of the Moon* by Gretchen Riggs. It was an exceedingly simple and tender arrangement of balanced blue and white spacings, one that I could still sketch accurately and one that will be very generally remembered. Next came a brutal, snowy bit of street realism in *Dregs*, and then that surprising conceit of *Mrs. Margaret Calhoun*—still affording no chance to attempt a generalization. But I simply cannot pass over this latter without a word upon both play and setting. No atmosphere less reciprocal than the one Miss Bingham maintained at the Workshop could bring playwright and decorator into that intimacy required to avoid the ludicrous in such a play. Hecht and Bodenheim, the authors, animated and gave human form to the phrases of a love-letter, and these pale greenish silhouettes were caused by Sloan to appear behind a translucent drop, painted to represent a huge envelope, and finally to issue from the torn end, to play out their brief and sordid tragedy in the dim land down stage. So were Dante's spiritual realms visualized, one might almost say rationalized, by his painter's vision of form and light.

So much for an individual work; but the pleasure of it leaves us as far as ever from an index. Nowhere in these three sets do we find a facile likeness in idea or treatment, and the chance of placing this artist in one of the handy pigeon-holes is as remote as ever. As old as art, is its inflexibility toward the critic, and almost as old is the ambition of the critic to make the art he criticises conform to an earlier and standardized tradition. Thus are his comparisons and contrasts made easy, and thus are the issues confused. To avoid a criticism of criticism, and to get back to the interesting work of Mr. Sloan, I propose a new plan. Instead of trying to fit a free spirit into a cramped niche, I shall name Versatility as the key-note of J. Blanding Sloan's art, and try to

show that while his work is modern in conception and extremely sensitive in treatment, it aims at a sane modernity and avoids any mawkish affectation in its delicacy.

During his first season in 1916 he designed and executed about fifteen sets, and from the first established himself as a colorist. Very often these sets were accompanied by complete costume and property designs and always with a structural, sculpturesque sense of the play of light and the third dimension. Like the other stage artists to whom the time-honored unities of the drama are something felt and not a mere cant phrase, Mr. Sloan has searched in vain for a definition, a word, that will explain rationally and coldly what he can consummate irrationally and artistically. Scene as background will not do, as it defines too strict a limit. Scene as a picture is static and opposed to the dynamics of dramatic action. Environment is fair but is cold and smacks of too literal a science as well. Locality is only local. Ensemble would be perfect, could we but force ourselves to think of it in terms of the complete drama. My own favorite though rather clumsy version is "Visualization of mental environment." It is this point of view that has given a certain delicacy to the sets, all of which are sensitive. The treatment has always been strong enough to support the action and never so boisterous as to overwhelm the actor and playwright in a stage riot. Unlike music, stage art requires the impetuosity of a virtuoso, combined with the restraint and instant response of a skilled accompanist, and these powers Mr. Sloan possesses to a remarkable degree.

What is perhaps the purest example of this in Sloan's work is the set for *The Myth of the Mirror*, a Japanese pantomime by Gretchen Riggs. Here we feel that it is not a stage scene nor a "set," nor yet an artist's enlarged design. From every point of view the note struck by *The Myth of the Mirror*, and sustained in the scale, spacing, color, lighting and acting, conveys a mental state which borders on enchantment. The only thing approaching a parallel, which I have seen, was a rare performance of a butterfly-fairytale played behind a gauze by some marionettes in Italy. *The Myth of the Mirror* reflected the truest beauty. Such beauty described is apt to be beauty desecrated, but one may perhaps say that the mechanics of this remarkable achievement were simply some sliding, transparent panels, through and between which were caught fugitive glimpses of blue sky and cherry boughs, players and cherry blossoms. At one point, with the stage dimmed, a little maid flitted across with a yellow

lantern, the panels opening up a wonderful contrast with the blossoms and the sky. Afterwards Mr. Sloan said to me, "I was so surprised at its fineness that I can hardly truly think I did it." The memory of that one perfect moment of time obliterates sad hours of disillusionment spent in many theatres in many lands.

In less than two years Mr. Sloan has designed and executed upward of two dozen sets. The earlier of these were for the Players' Workshop, followed by a notable achievement with the Modern Players under Mr. George Foster Platt at the Pabst Theatre at Milwaukee. It was here that *The Pirate* and *The Pigeon* first saw the light in America. Some of Mr. Sloan's designs have been seen in Detroit and other eastern cities in an exhibition of stage scenes gotten together by Mr. Hume. Lately Mr. Sloan has been associated as art director with the new Players' Workshop which has taken the form of a Community Theatre. It is situated in a school building, donated by the Chicago school board, and is under the direction of Mr. Frederick Bruegger. Beyond the range of art, it is attracting considerable attention as an expansion of civics, though artists will rejoice in the fact that J. Blanding Sloan has made his artistic mark and reached an artistic goal without the aid of sociology.



Production in London and in Moscow

"A play is never cast right and never will be," was what one said. "The hurry of production. *Macbeth* is due on Friday week, but there are scenes and scenes to get right yet. Well, worry at the worst of these, or the most important; the others must stay wrong." I have postponed a play a bare week and my business manager has nearly wept at the cost and complication.

So—"Plays never are properly produced and never will be," one shrugs.

I asked Stanislavsky how long he rehearsed a play.

"Till it is ready," he answered.—H. GRANVILLE BARKER, in "At the Moscow Art Theatre" in *The Seven Arts*.



Three issues of Gordon Craig's long-promised magazine, *The Marionette*, have appeared. In each is folded a four-page leaflet bearing the title and serial number of *The Mask*, the famous quarterly which was discontinued soon after the war broke out. The new publication is even more puzzling and more caustic than the old, and quite as interesting. Like all Gordon Craig's other writings the contents are stimulating and appealing, even when most perverse. *The Marionette's* address is Box 444, Florence, Italy.

The Theatre Arts Chronicle

The Actors' and Authors' Theatre

A VENTURE which has blossomed with some success in New York during the spring, and which bids fair to become something of a force in the theatrical world, is the Actors' and Authors' Theatre, Incorporated. This organization, whose aim is to bring together for mutual benefit the idle actor and the untried play, is based on a coöperative scheme whereby those who contribute their services or invest money in the enterprise are entitled to a share of the profits, if any. So far there have been no financial "profits" to speak of, the gross receipts of one of the performances, it is said, having been less than ten dollars. The projectors of the scheme, however, have by no means given up hope, and ambitious plans are now under way for next season. Artistically the aims of the theatre are similar to those of experimental and little theatre groups throughout the country; but only professional actors will appear.

The organization has been carrying on its activities at the Fulton Theatre, this attractive house having been generously given rent free by Mrs. Henry B. Harris. Here during May and June two different bills were presented, consisting of one full-length play, *Her Honor, the Mayor* by Arline Van Ness Hines, and a bill of one-act plays. With the possible exception of *Nocturne*, the dramatic craftsmanship of these productions was distinctly inferior in quality to the acting and stage direction.

A number of well-known players have appeared for the Actors' and Authors' Theatre, including Laura Nelson Hall, Elizabeth Risdon, Minnie Dupree, Edith Taliaferro, Hilda Spong, Grace Fisher, Mrs. Thomas A. Wise, Auriol Lee, Whitford Kane, and Regan Hughston. Otis Skinner is president of the organization, while others who are giving the project their active support are: Henrietta Crossman, Janet Beecher, Olive Wyndham, Cosmo Hamilton, Louis K. Anspacher, Louis Shipman, Augustus Thomas, Grant Mitchell, Harry Sothern, and Dudley E. Oatman.

Next season the organization expects to make its headquarters in a different theatre, and one of the most interesting features of its policy will be the setting aside of the entire balcony for the use of men in uniform. Men of the army and navy will not only be admitted free of charge, but will also be invited to bring their women folk with them. This, it is felt, will be a distinct innovation and a popular feature, and will make the Theatre not only headquarters of the Actors' and Authors' but also the theatrical home of army and navy men in New York. The committee appointed to work out the details of this plan is headed by Mrs. Ann Irish, and includes Daniel Frohman, David Warfield, Mrs. Fiske, Miss Julia Arthur, Miss Elsa Maxwell and John C. Freund.

RICHARD SILVESTER.

Repertory Again

IN OUR summer issue last year we published an article entitled "Fooling with Repertory," in which we expressed some skepticism about the announcements of certain stars and producers who were promising "repertory" seasons. The failures of Grace George and Margaret Anglin to establish permanent companies, and the miscarriage of Stuart Walker's Indianapolis "Propylæum" project, give new point to our remarks at that time. The other scheme mentioned, that of Ethel Barrymore, became more permanent, the Empire Theatre being the home of her remarkably able company for most of the season. But her choice of plays was so ill-advised — *Camille* was her most serious production — that it is difficult to attach any importance to the "season."

This year, however, we find grounds for real hope in the announcements of repertory projects. B. Iden Payne, who has had to do with the best of

the English repertory theatres, and who has been a force for betterment in the New York commercial playhouses for two seasons past, is to assume direction of the Belmont Theatre, and has announced a repertory program.

The Coburns have taken the Greenwich Village Theatre for the season, and will try to realize a long-cherished plan for a permanently established company offering frequent changes of bill. They own the rights of *The Yellow Jacket* and several of Gilbert Murray's translations from the Greek; and their record in general is such that we look forward to their New York experiment with pleasant expectation.

But the most hopeful indication that there is to be a permanent repertory theatre in New York, founded on experience and in the hands of a capable director, can be found in the announcement of Arthur Hopkins that he will continue the policy he adopted last spring in presenting a series of Ibsen's plays with an established company, in one theatre, and with monthly change of bill. He may not adopt immediately the revival feature which characterizes the true repertory theatre; but he is building surely, if slowly, toward such an institution.

We have heard reports of other repertory schemes for the coming season, but most of them smack of the press agent's careless use of the word. The idea is at least alive, however, and even that is a triumph in these days when it is so obviously easy for the producer to make money by joining the procession of war-play profiteers.

S. C.

New Progress in Milwaukee THE summer season of repertory at the Pabst Theatre in Milwaukee, under the direction of Russell Janney, is proving very interesting and is an undoubted artistic success. Large audiences, too, acclaim it to be a popular success. That both results are achieved at one time argues well for the policy of the director. He has gathered about him a company of excellent artists, all enthusiasts, and most of them with well-earned reputations in the theatre world.

On the producing staff are Oscar Eagle and Robert Edmond Jones, the latter being also responsible for the scenery. The lighting effects, which are made an important part of each production, are directed by Norman-Bel Geddes.

The excellence of the players is unquestioned. The principals include Beatrice Beckey, Alice Augarde Butler, Dorothy Cheston, Constance Collier, Irene Haisman, Cathleen Nesbitt and Gilda Varesi among the women; Wallis Clark, Edmond Elton, Julian L'Estrange, Walter Lewis, Malcolm Morley, Alexander Onslow, William Phinney, J. L. Shine, Frank Sylvester and Cecil Yapp among the men.

The company opened on June 3 with Bernard Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, preceded by Zoë Akins' *The Magical City*. It was a good beginning. The first piece treats a commonplace story in terms of romance, through the medium of free verse. The scene was meshed in a huge spider's web, while through the open window at the back could be seen the harsh, mystic, beautiful silhouette of the magical city of Gotham. Shaw's satire was greatly liked and proved easy work for the company. It is second-rate Shaw, but second-rate Shaw is always worth while.

The second bill was *Trilby*, with Constance Collier in the title rôle. It was reminiscent of stage glories of two decades past. A few of the delicacies of DuMaurier's story showed through the fustian cloak woven by the adapter, and made it moderately interesting. *The Garden of Paradise* by Edward Sheldon, from Hans Andersen's story of *The Little Mermaid*, followed. This play, which was such a dire failure when produced in New York with a superabundance of scenery and accessories, has proven the greatest success of the organization. It is a triumph for Robert Edmond Jones. The imaginative treatment, the simple magnificence of the staging and the wonderful effects obtained in the lighting of the many scenes, all enhanced the beauties

of the original story. An extensive cyclorama and the "X-Ray Border" of lights were used by Jones, and demonstrated their worth by the remarkable results achieved. *The Garden of Paradise* was played for two weeks, an unusual run for any play in a city the size of Milwaukee.

The next production was Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*. This epigrammatic melodrama was well handled by the players. Jones' scenery was bizarre, suggesting Aubrey Beardsley.

A new play was given in *Hempfield*, an adaptation by Charlotte Thompson of David Grayson's novel. A story of New England rural life, with the heart-throb of the average magazine contribution, it was below the standard of the earlier productions. Nevertheless, the theatre should be catholic in its appeal, and for this reason *Hempfield* is well included in Russell Janney's repertory.

Following, as it does, the summer season of notable "modern" plays staged by George Foster Platt at the same theatre last year, this second triumph marks Milwaukee as one of the important centers of dramatic progress in this country.

M. M.

Community Drama at Pasadena AN interesting experiment in linking the community drama movement with a regularly producing theatre has been made by the Community Players of Pasadena, California, under the direction of Gilmor Brown. There is a small professional company which works regularly, and a large group of associated players drawn from all walks of life. A producing department offers facilities for experiment in stagecraft. Bills are changed weekly, and the offerings range from farce and plays by local writers to dramas of Shakespeare, Calderon and Molière. More than two hundred people have been concerned in this season's productions, and the work has been further related to community life by alliances with the schools and with the organizers of local community singing. The Players are planning for a home of their own, and the experiment promises to become a firmly established feature in the life of the community.

A.

At the Little and Experimental Theatres

As America's war program gains impetus, it becomes increasingly apparent that war-time conditions are playing havoc with the little theatres. The experimental playhouses are primarily of and for the young blood in the dramatic world, and it is the young that Uncle Sam is taking for his armies. The collapse of the Washington Square Players in New York was followed closely by the announcement that the Greenwich Village Players would suspend production for a year at least, both the director and the assistant director having been called into war service. The more's the pity because the organization left an inconclusive impression from the last two bills of the season, Maurice Hewlett's *Pan and the Young Shepherd* and a group of one-act plays. One felt that the project was still on trial, having failed to achieve a signal success and yet doing promising work to the end. In New York next season the Provincetown Players will continue their experimental productions, opening on November first in a larger playhouse; the Greenleaf Theatre will be established in more adequate quarters, as soon as the directors, Maxwell Armfield and Constance Smedley, return from California, where they have been conducting a successful summer season of teaching and experiment in community drama; and the Neighborhood Playhouse will carry on its work as heretofore.

From the West come many reports of curtailed activity. The famous Prairie Playhouse of Galesburg has acknowledged itself a victim of war conditions, and we are even asked to announce that it has for sale dimmers, switch-board, curtains, etc. (Write to Miss Alida E. Fench, 359 S. West

Street, Galesburg, Illinois). The Artists' Guild Theatre of St. Louis is still on the doubtful list. It closed a remarkably successful season in April; but the director, Irving Pichel, is now engaged in war work, and a new season probably will not be undertaken without him. The St. Louis Art League, however, has announced a prize competition for the best one-act play written by a resident of St. Louis. A similar competition held last year proved highly successful in stimulating and calling out local talent in playwriting. In Kansas City the work started in 1917 by the Harlequin Players, and discontinued when America entered the war, was resumed in April under the name of "The Comedy Players"; and plans are being made for continuance during the coming season.

The Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit continues to be the most vital expression of the progressive spirit in the theatres of this country. The fourth bill of the 1917-1918 season was as follows: *The Golden Doom* by Lord Dunsany, *The Girl in the Coffin* by Theodore Dreiser, and Philip Moeller's *Pokey*. The fifth bill included Lord Dunsany's *Fame and the Poet* (the first production on any stage), Masfield's *Philip the King*, and A. A. Milne's *Wursel-Flummery*. The sixth and last bill of the season included *Fog* by Eugene O'Neill, *Everybody's Husband* by Gilbert Cannan, *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge, and *Literature* by Arthur Schnitzler. Miss Dorothea Spinney offered at the Theatre in April and May a series of three interpretations of Greek tragedies; and a special bill of revivals was arranged in May for the delegates to the annual convention of the American Federation of Arts. Plans have been made for a third season of productions under the direction of Sam Hume.

From the scarcity of reports from other little theatres, we judge that the draft boards have made a specialty of calling away press representatives. Repeated requests have left us without information about many playhouses which have been represented regularly in these pages heretofore.

ONE of the best bits of recent theatre news is that the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* will continue its productions in New York through another season, under the direction of Jacques Copeau. The organization will open its season at the old Garrick Theatre in October.

New Books About the Theatre

HOW'S YOUR SECOND ACT? by Arthur Hopkins. In this little volume one finds the personal creed and profession of faith of the most progressive and most talented producer in the American professional theatre. We know of no other book by an American which is quite so important as a stimulus to a better art of the theatre, or so clear a statement of a practical theory of stage production. We wish that it could be made a textbook, and that all workers in the theatre could be compelled to read it thoughtfully. We wonder why the writer stooped to use such a flippant and irrelevant title; but the text renews our faith that there will yet come an era of sincerity and enlightened effort on the American stage. (New York: The Philip Goodman Company. 90c.)

THE GREEK THEATRE AND ITS DRAMA by Roy C. Flickinger. To the scholar and archæologist this comprehensive volume will prove a mine of interest; to the general reader it can be little more than a reference work,

proving extremely valuable at times, but not inviting continuous reading. There is place for a readable book that summarizes the world's present knowledge of the Greek theatre and drama; Professor Flickinger, however has chosen the controversial attitude and the academic-judicial method, and so the average reader will still find the works of Haigh or Murray more to his taste. But for many matters of detail, and particularly for light on such disputed points as the form of the Greek stage, this new volume displaces all its predecessors. There is an introduction dealing with the origins of tragedy and of comedy and with the form of the Greek theatre; then follow chapters on the influences of religious origin, of choral origin, of actors, of festival arrangements, of physical conditions, of national customs and ideas, and finally of theatrical machinery and dramatic conventions; and a last chapter of theatrical records. Despite its endless divergencies, philological inquiries and precautionary notes, even the unacademic reader must admire the volume for its completeness and its fairness. Incidentally, it is very well illustrated. Clearly a book for every dramatic library. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. \$3.00.)

MODERN THEATRE CONSTRUCTION by Edward Bernard Kinsila. In this book one finds much valuable information combined with many obvious and time-worn facts. The author is more engineer than artist. His chapters on structural problems show that he has gathered the most advanced technical ideas from the world's best theatres, and he insists upon them bravely. He also champions simple, tasteful decorative schemes; but he has little to say as to how they may be achieved. Many plans and photographs are included, a majority of which are not easily accessible elsewhere. The material is not well organized, and the text is somewhat amateurishly written. Despite its obvious faults, however, the book stands as the most important American work on theatre building, and so should be in every dramatic library. (New York: The Moving Picture World. \$2.50.)

INTERPRETERS AND INTERPRETATIONS by Carl Van Vechten. What we like most about this writer is his way of bringing music and musicians right into the living-room and sitting down to expound them without the embarrassment of hero-worship or the humbuggery of critical cant. This is a collection of monographs on such notables as Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden and Yvette Guilbert, with added papers on such amiable problems as "The Great American Composer" and "Why Music is Unpopular." Opera-lovers in particular will find the book both readable and informative, and students of the modern theatre should not miss the chapter entitled "The Problem of Style in the Production of Opera." Not a book of permanent importance, but one of an interesting, intimate sort that too seldom appears in the field of art criticism. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.00.)

ENGLISH PAGEANTRY: AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE by Robert Withington. This is the first volume of an exhaustive history of pageantry and of the related dramatic types. There is very little about the pageant as an art-form, and every seeker for light on the problems of production will find this book disappointing. But there are innumerable details about historical sources, type characters and representative episodes, forming a scholarly and disquisitionary survey of the background of the art itself. The scope of the volume is indicated in such divisional headings as Folk Mumming, Processions, The Tournament, The Disguising, and The Royal Entry. The illustrations are numerous and well chosen, and the book is well made. The work is altogether of the sort the average reader greatly admires without finding any particular interest in it. We hope that the second and concluding volume, which will treat pageantry in its more modern aspects, will be more readable and somewhat fuller on the artistic side. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. \$3.50.)

DANCING WITH HELEN MOLLER. Miss Moller has got hold of some good ideas about dancing and about life, and somebody has put them into fairly expressive form for her. We have found the reading of this book, indeed, a pleasant task; and we have met in certain chapters several truths which cannot be repeated too often. But Miss Moller's scorn of technique leads her into many a pitfall, and she often betrays her limited understanding of dancing as an art. She writes much about æsthetic aspects, but her own contribution lies rather in the realm of hygiene. The book is pretentious, with many "art plates"; but it has an air of the cheap and commercial book-maker about it. We wonder that the John Lane Company would put its imprint upon such a product—and have the audacity to ask six dollars for it. (New York: John Lane Company. \$6.00.)

HORIZONS, by Francis Hackett, is a collection of criticisms of contemporary books and plays, reprinted from newspapers and magazines. Our chief quarrel with the volume is that it contains only sixty pages about the theatre. The other sections, about novels, poetry and war books, are interesting enough; but when we have so few critics with Hackett's clear-sightedness and vigor, we want to see more of his play reviews put into permanent form. These criticisms are singularly incisive and stimulating, and we recommend them as a tonic to those who are weary of the effusions of the usual newspaper reviewer. Only next time, Mr. Hackett, let us have more of them. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. \$2.00.)

AMATEUR AND EDUCATIONAL DRAMATICS, by Evelyne Hilliard, Theodora McCormick and Kate Oglebay, is a first-aid manual for teachers and others who would utilize dramatic production to build character, develop spontaneous expression and otherwise supplement academic education. Some of the chapters are exceedingly elementary, and at least one—that dealing with the use of the voice—is entirely inadequate. Others, such as those on playwriting and the process of production, are exceptionally good; and the one dealing with the body as an instrument is suggestive of an immense new field for educational training through the stage. With the knowledge to be gained from this book, teachers might make school dramatics an immense power for good instead of a tenth-rate imitation of our shoddiest commercial stages. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.00.)



The Newly Published Plays

SIX PLAYS FOR POEM-MIMES by Alfred Kreymborg. This little book marks a notable departure from the conventional formulas of modern play-writing, its six plays differing almost as radically from accepted types of "poetic drama" as from the journalistic Broadway product. Mr. Kreymborg's conception of the new form of drama is of "pantomime acting or dancing to an accompaniment of rhythmic lines, in place of music." It is only as a rhythmical accompaniment of action that his texts should be judged; and as such the best of them are both charming and suggestive of new and subtle delights on the stage. Necessarily such experiments in an unproven medium are unequal in merit. We find such trivialities as *Jack's House* somewhat intangible and over-conscious. In *Manikin and Minikin*, because it is the most novel and the least obscure of the plays, the little theatres will find the easiest approach to Mr. Kreymborg's ideals. This play has, indeed, already proved its charm and effectiveness on several stages. And others from the volume deserve sympathetic trial there. Altogether a book that the conventional-minded will scoff at, but a challenge and a stimulus to minds that are still open—and perhaps a promise of something new and beautiful in the theater.

THE SOCIAL DRAMAS OF ARTHUR WING PINERO, edited by Clayton Hamilton. It is a pleasure to be able at last to have a presentable edition of Pinero's plays on one's shelves. This one not only is well enough printed and bound to hold place as the standard edition, but gains greatly in interest through the editor's excellent historical and reminiscent introduction. We cannot agree with Clayton Hamilton's high ranking of Pinero as a dramatic artist. But he is a marvelous technician, and sufficiently important in the history of English drama to make his play-texts indispensable to even the smallest dramatic collection. This first volume of the series contains *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and the *Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*. Others have been announced for early appearance. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. \$2.00.)

THE LAND WHERE LOST THINGS GO by Doris Halman. This is the winning play in the Drama League's patriotic-play competition and in general design is just what such competitions usually bring forth—more or less in-expert as drama, obviously propagandist, and generally high-school-y. There is, of course, a tragedy of universal significance in the subject of the honest pacifist who gradually finds his position untenable in the face of newly revealed truths. But the author here has chosen to avoid the finer possibilities of her theme, placing her hero's pacifism on specious grounds, and side-stepping all suggestion of a soul-struggle. As a play-structure the composition is but passively interesting. There are qualities in the writing of it, however, that go far to redeem the piece. In the third act especially, there are passages so finely written, fantasy so fresh, and sentiment so tender and yet so restrained, that we mark Doris Halman as one of the most promising of younger American playwrights. (New York: Samuel French. 25c.)

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS, edited by Montrose J. Moses. This is the first volume of a projected series of three, which will cover the entire field of American drama, from the beginning in 1765 to plays produced as lately as 1911. In this first collection are grouped examples from the Colonial and Revolutionary periods. The work, prepared under the able editing of Mr. Moses, is necessarily very important as a source-book in the history of the American theatre; but the initial volume is not likely to find wide reading outside of college students and curio-hunters. The texts include such well-known plays as Tyler's *The Contrast* and Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia*, as well as contemporary treatments of such subjects as the Battle of Bunker Hill, the André story and the Pochahontas story. Altogether the collection seems unusually well selected and adequate, and the editor's general introduction, prefatory notes and bibliographies make the volume a standard reference work. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. \$3.00.)

PURPLE YOUTH, by Robert De Camp Leland, is a one-act satire, telling how two artist-lovers trap "the Everlasting Puritan" into compromising himself and paying for the couple's much-desired trip to an aesthetes' paradise. Much as all anti-Philistines must appreciate the viewpoint, the skit proves a bit thin and unconvincing. (Boston: The Four Seas Company. \$1.00.)

NIGHT, by James Oppenheim, is a one-act play in free verse, which was successfully produced by the Provincetown Players early this season. It is thoughtful and poetic rather than deeply dramatic; but we mark it as one of the most successful of recent attempts to bring the new poetry to the stage. Some of the lines are singularly beautiful, and the whole well repays reading. (New York: Egmont Arens. 35c.)

THE ANGEL INTRUDES, by Floyd Dell, is a preposterous and bright satire, telling how a man is saved by his Guardian Angel from running away with an adorable flirt—the angel substituting himself in the runaway match. The comparisons of mortal and celestial institutions make this variation of an old theme highly diverting. (New York: Egmont Arens. 35c.)

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated review, published four times each year, in the months of December, February, May and September, by Sheldon Cheney. Editorial and business office at 220 West 42nd Street, New York, New York.

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Entered as second-class matter January 24, 1918, at the postoffice at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1918, by Sheldon Cheney. Yearly subscription, \$1.50. Single copies, 50 cents.

Volume II *Summer Number (dated May) 1918* Number 3

Editorial Comment

The Washington Square Players No OTHER topic is quite so widely discussed on Broadway just now as the "failure" of the Washington Square Players. In the popular sense, and in the legal sense, the Players have failed—they did not make enough money to meet expenses of rent, salary, light, heat, and other things that must be looked after before art can be considered. To us, however, this does not seem a failure.

The Washington Square Players have merely fulfilled their destiny and have gone. They did excellent pioneering work in their first year or two. But they soon made two mistakes which precluded a large contribution to a "new theatre" in their later life. So they have run their course—and now have left their place open for others to fill.

Their greatest service to the progressive movement lies in their proving that even New York has an audience for what is too fresh and sincere for the jaded commercial producer to recognize, and too strange to Broadway custom to find a way through other stage-doors—an audience large enough to sustain a coöperative group if it is less top-heavy financially than this one. They also gave brief opportunities to such important decorative artists as Lee Simonson and Rollo Peters, and they opened a way to larger audiences for many a beginning American playwright. In the final accounting these are credits not lightly to be put aside because of financial bankruptcy.

Of course the war had something to do with the immediate collapse of the organization. But the deeper causes, the reasons why the Players could not long continue as an expression of the best impulse of the younger artists in the theatre, date back to the days before America went a-warring.

In the first place the Players subjected themselves to an impossible limitation when they assumed the rent burden of the Comedy Theatre and the nearby office and workshop building. Starting without capitalization, they thus put themselves in a precarious financial position, where they had to please a large public with each program or go down to disaster. The result was elimination of every really experimental production, the death in rehearsal of plays that proved not to have popular appeal—no matter what their poetic or intellectual value—and hurried production of "fillers."

In the second place the organization failed to develop a director with genius or even extensive talent. Edward Goodman deserves large credit for guiding it through its business troubles for so long. But he is not an artist of broad vision, nor even an expert producer in the Broadway sense.

So long as he held the directing reins there were bound to be loose ends in the producing—bits of acting that did not fit in, imperfect coördination between settings and action, and general lack of the distinction and smoothness that should characterize art-theatre productions. The Comedy Theatre group has never done anything so fine artistically as the best work of Maurice Browne's group at Chicago; and it has never had the vitality which the Arts and Crafts group has enjoyed under Sam Hume's direction at Detroit. The Washington Square organization suffered from a fundamental deficiency: it had no inspired artist-director.

If the Washington Square Players failed, their failure does not bring us any sense of uneasiness over the future of the progressive theatre. The group that takes their place—and one will—should profit by those two mistakes. If it thus avoids the self-imposed financial handicap, and if it seeks first of all the best available artist-director, it may become the permanent embodiment of the art-theatre idea in New York.



About Names How many theatres in New York—even in America—have names worth protecting? How many would, for the sake of the theatre's reputation, refuse to book a salacious play, a musical comedy, or movies, if the rent offered were rich enough? How many are put on a dignified institutional plane, above the temptation to sell out at the first glittering offer—on the plane that is observed at a hundred European playhouses?

In New York there is Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre. But how many more?

The question occurs after reading a defense of the Metropolitan Opera Directors against charges of culpability for Helen Moller's nude dancing. One reads that they simply rented out the Opera House in the usual way—that is, to the first person with sufficient money. Their pay once secured, what concern was it of theirs if vulgarity flaunted itself all over the place? Later they entertained an offer to turn their theatre over to a moving-picture producer for the summer—a project which fell through only after the movie season there had been announced in all the newspapers. Obviously the Metropolitan Opera House name is not worth protecting.

We are reconciled to the necessity for an amusement business which will control a majority of the theatres for many years—and which will probably remain for many years in the hands of vulgarians and profiteers. But is it not time for America to have a few, even a score of theatres that maintain a dignified standard, that protect their reputations, that have continuously at least a semblance of interest in art?



Gordon Craig ONE hears occasionally—it is usually the shallow, flippant dramatic reporter of a newspaper who speaks—this sentiment: "Gordon Craig? . . . Oh, he's gone off on puppets!"

Who are the American critics, that they should pronounce snap-judgment on an artist of Craig's stature? Here is a man who has spent his lifetime in the theatre, who has tested its possibilities from the inside and from the outside, who has loved it, renounced it, loved it again, worked for it, dreamed for it—and who is busy now carving its image according to a vision shaped through forty years. A master, if any exists, in the theatre of to-day. And then come our callow Broadway night-life critics, to wave him away with a jest or a superior smile!

"Gone off" indeed! Well, we believe that until we follow patiently down the trail of every one of these chaps who go off, until we see their visions clearly, and enquire into their reasons for discarding this piece of the dramatic puzzle or adding that one, we shall have no true art of the theatre.

Besides, we prefer on principle those that go off to those that never stir the air at all—or those that merely fizzle.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

Volume II

September, 1918

Number 4

The People's Theatre

By Claude Bragdon

Picture three eminent specialists—one American, one English, and one French—together in some hushed antechamber beyond which lies Thalia Melpomene, near to death by reason of her trafficking with lovers, panders, parasites. What news, what hope, we ask of them, for she has been our friend in happier days. Dr. George Jean Nathan makes no pretense at being anything but a diagnostician. He reports her plight as desperate, but perhaps not beyond hope. Although we suspect him of belonging to her inner circle, he goes away to supper at the Ritz with a smile and a jest directed at the lady's character and the company she keeps. Dr. Gordon Craig declares that she is dead or as good as dead already, and that we are wasting our sympathy and our time. Accordingly he hurries away to a certain castle in Florence where he has a confinement case—the expected birth of an infant of whose paternity we are not left in doubt. Dr. Romain Rolland takes the matter far more seriously. Yes, decidedly there is hope, but only if we will throw all of the old medicines out of the window and administer a specific which he has carefully prepared to meet the given case. He leaves the bottle in our hands, and tiptoes out.

It is in some such figure as this that the varying points of view of these three men present themselves to the imagination. Let us examine each of them in turn and extract such wisdom as we can. The subject is a vital one; for aside from the joy it brings, the theater, as Mercier declared, "is the most potent and direct means of strengthening human reason and enlightening the whole nation."

The Popular Theatre (Knopf; \$1.60) is a subject which easily lends itself to the note of cynical humor native to the talent of Mr. George Jean Nathan. But why this parade of sheer futility—why write a book about anything as bad as all that?

Why indeed! It is because he is enamored, I am enamored, you, dear reader—we, they, he, she—all are enamored of the Idea of the Theater. It holds us, it thrills us, and Mr. Nathan most of all. Despite his protestations of boredom, his lethal draughts of Edmond de Goncourt, and the draft on the back of his neck, we feel sure that each night he would be nowhere but in his allotted seat, hoping

against hope for the remembered old or some new rapture which only the theater has the power to arouse. Poor flagellant of Broadway! he loves his self-inflicted torture and the echo of his own sardonic laughter, which is really a cry of pain.

Mr. Nathan does not moralize about the theater; he has little to say concerning its past, and nothing of its future, but paints an authentic portrait, touched with amiable malice, of what is passing under the spotlights in the general latitude and longitude of Long-acre Square. Despite the fact that the book represents only a season's crop of magazine ephemera it is full of humor, knowledge, and good sense; but the humor is tintured with acidity, the knowledge highly specialized, and the good sense that of Mr. Worldly Wiseman—especially when these are contrasted with the gayety, the culture, the spiritual wisdom of Mr. Gordon Craig.

Mr. Craig's occasional commentaries on the popular theater of Britain and America, from far-distant Florence—in *The Marionette*, the little magazine that has succeeded *The Mask*—are quite as witty as Mr. Nathan's, and they are informed with a wisdom to which the latter will never attain so long as he continues to circle about the white lights of Broadway. Mr. Nathan, in his preface, hazards the opinion that into the popular theater is coming an infusion of young blood, of fresh ideas, and a new esthetic which may save it from softening of the brain. To Mr. Craig, on the contrary, these things are in the nature of saline injections to keep alive a little longer a body doomed, if not already dead. He abjures every sincere artist who has anything to contribute to withhold the gift, since it

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated review, published four times each year, in the months of December, February, May and September, by Sheldon Cheney. Editorial and business office at 220 West 42nd Street, New York, New York.

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Entered as second-class matter January 24, 1918, at the postoffice at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1918, by Sheldon Cheney. Yearly subscription, \$1.50. Single copies, 50 cents.

Volume II *Autumn Number (dated September) 1918* Number 4

will immediately be seized upon by the predatory powers that own and rule the theater, and turned to account in imparting a factitious flush of health to a fatally diseased organism. When it is proposed to close the London theaters at nine-thirty o'clock as a fuel-saving measure, "Why not at eight-thirty?" suggests Mr. Craig. He believes that the theater will have to perish in order to be born, and that all actors should die of the plague.

Mr. Craig so loves the Idea of the Theater that he has exiled himself in order to discover and develop, far from the pestilential atmosphere of the rialtos, what he conceives to be the Art of the Theater. He claims for the theater an independent esthetic, involving the organization of linear and spatial rhythms, a synthesis of space, sound, movement, and light. He would restore the theater to its original estate—that of a temple for the symbolical representation of mysteries; and in place of a master of revels he demands, in effect, an artist-priest, "a man who wants nothing for himself . . . but nothing short of ALL for the theater."

Mr. Craig is clairvoyant in vision, logical in thought; he has the high courage to follow where his vision leads and to realize his thought in action; his position with relation to the theater of the future is enviable and secure. But even if we grant him ideal conditions and the complete realization of his dream, it is doubtful if he would ever succeed in making the public eat out of his hand; in so far as he has tried it he has failed.

For Mr. Craig is a fastidious artist, scornful of democracy; he requires for audience "a pit of kings"—that is, those sensitive to beauty, like himself. A product of that aborted estheticism which raged in England at the time when he was born, he was never permitted an ugly plaything by his beautiful mother and beauty-loving father; thus was he prepared for his high destiny, that of developing the Art of the Theater. Now beauty is something that the theater of the future cannot do without, but neither can it do without poetry, passion, and the stir of life. These things Mr. Craig is incapable of supplying in any form intelligible and acceptable to the mass of humankind. For him there is poetry in line and mass, passion in light and color, and the stir of life in the movement of marionettes; but such abstractions will never satisfy those simple souls that crave the concrete above all else.

M. Romain Rolland seems nearer than Mr. Craig to a solution of the problem of the popular theater by just so much as he appears changed conditions which, by reason of the rising tide of democracy, to be nearer to the movement of the modern consciousness. In *The People's Theater* (Holt; \$1.35) he shows an awareness to the racy, must govern the theater. Mr. Nathan describes the transi-

tional theater, gives us a snapshot of an edifice at the moment of its collapse; Mr. Craig has always in mind the ultimate theater, when men shall have become as gods—or little children; while M. Rolland concerns himself with what he conceives to be the needs of the theater of tomorrow—of triumphant democracy:

The People's Theater is the key to a new art world, which art has hardly caught sight of. We have reached a parting of the ways, beyond which lies an almost totally unexplored land. Two or three more venturesome spirits have gone ahead. But the instinct of the people should have guided these artists. The people speak frankly, and their preferences leave no possible room for doubt. But what artist cares in the least what the public wants? They consider it contemptible not to feel contempt for the people.

And by the people he does not mean the bourgeoisie, but the workers—the long denied. Everything that Mr. Nathan has to say about the popular theater and the psychology of its audiences is doubtless true, but it is of the bourgeois theater that he is speaking; for that, and our feeble attempts at an esthetic theatre, are the only ones we have to show. Doubtless the cinema might be considered in the light of a people's theater, were it a theater in the true sense and not an animated storybook. The circus, melodrama, and burlesque are the nearest things we have to a people's theater, and they are far more worthy of serious consideration than the entertainments upon the discussion of which Mr. Nathan wastes his wit and good print paper. The circus is universal in its appeal, and in more skilful and intelligent hands might be made a thing of beauty and wonder without abating anything of its popular appeal. The great Greek dramas and the Shakespearean plays are in the last analysis melodramas pure and simple. As M. Rolland says, "there is no form so difficult and so sublime as great poetic melodrama." Burlesque, in the form of the revue, could be made into a criticism of life, doing more effectively and more amusingly what the newspaper cartoons now do.

But according to M. Rolland, the people's theater will be different from all these—more beautiful, noble, and impressive—while at the same time retaining and sublimating the elements that give them popularity. So far as melodrama is in question, these elements he agrees with M. Georges Jubin in believing to be "Mingling of pleasing and painful emotions, True realism, Simple morality, and Getting one's money's worth." He lays great stress on the possible value of a developed form of historical drama; he sees possibilities in the rustic drama, and in popular legends and tales. He is opposed to the portrayal of unrelieved misery before the people, as in Hauptmann's *The Weavers* and Tolstoi's *The Powers of Darkness*—such pieces should be reserved for the rich and idle, to whom they might do some good. Joy, energy, and intelligence he declares to be the fundamental requisites of the people's theater.

M. Rolland's program, it will be seen, savors a little of "assimilating the public taste in order to reproduce it." His idea is to synthesize and sublimate those elements in the theater of the past and of the present that survive the severe test he puts them to. Mr. Craig disdains such caution and such compromise—for him the new theater must be really new. In spite of M. Rolland's scholarly analysis, in spite of his brilliant deductions from known premises, I cannot conquer a certain skepticism.

The reason for this is plain when the translator's preface is referred to: these essays were written some fifteen years ago. This makes them as unreliable as an old map of Europe will be after the peace conference. Doubtless M. Rolland knew, or thought he knew, what the people wanted *then*, and what would be good for them; but does he know, does anyone know, what they want *now*? The men who by millions have gone forth to battle, looking death and devastation in the face; the women who by millions have salted their scant food with tears—have not dramas been enacted before their eyes and experienced in their secret hearts that will render intolerable everything that any save such as they themselves may be able to formulate for their solace or their delight? A mystery surrounds these souls into which we cannot penetrate.

I remember sitting one night last winter—or rather, early one morning—at a table among a company of friends in New York's most sumptuous and beautiful pleasure garden, watching the kaleidoscopic progress of the Midnight Follies, staged by Joseph Urban and presented by the cleverest entertainers that big salaries could bribe. Food, wine, tobacco, grace, beauty, wit, laughter made an intoxicating brew. Everyone seemed in an ecstasy of happiness, when suddenly I noticed standing behind a nearby table and looking fixedly at the stage an American officer of aviation, with the double wings on his breast. He was young, hardly more than a boy; beautiful as Dionysus, graceful as a faun; but the look in his eyes belonged neither to the present, nor to any past the world has witnessed: it was fixed and far—the look of vigil. The soul of him was in some other dimension of space. I have never been able to forget this youthful figure, nor the expression of those eyes. So now, when people talk or write about the theater, and "what the public wants" I conjure up his image, and I wonder what he wanted then or may be wanting now. Then I know that all their talk is idle: that only the future can know the future's needs.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—When we found this article by Claude Bragdon in a recent issue of *The Dial*, we asked, and were granted, permission to reprint it where it would reach a wider audience of theatre people. We feel that we could not give up the limited space in this issue to anything that would be of interest to a larger group of our readers.

The New Published Plays

ANATOL: LIVING HOURS: THE GREEN COCKATOO, by Arthur Schnitzler. This new volume in the attractive "Modern Library" series contains the best collection of Schnitzler's shorter plays yet published in this country. All seven of the famous *Anatol* episodes are presented, as well as the very important *Green Cockatoo* and the cycle called *Living Hours*—the latter including both *Literature* and *The Lady With the Dagger*. The publishers have done a distinct service to both the reading public and the independent producing theatres in thus bringing together so much that is charming and intriguing and exquisite—even if cynical and untrue—from the work of "the perfect Viennese." (New York: Boni & Liveright. 60c.)

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN: VOLUME SEVEN. This is the final volume of the authorized edition of Hauptmann's plays which B. W. Huebsch has been publishing at intervals. It is important as completing the first American collection of the plays of a dramatist who should be accessible at all times; but this particular volume is less interesting than those previously published, being in the nature of a group of odds and ends. The two long pieces, *The Commemoration Masque* and *The Bow of Odysseus* are historical and legendary in character, and they doubtless lose much in translation—in the labored rhymed couplets of the one and the undistinguished blank verse of the other. The publisher has put the series into excellent form, both the printing and the binding being of unusual quality. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. \$1.50.)

PLAYS by Jacinto Benavente. This volume brings together four representative plays of a contemporary Spanish dramatist, in serviceable translations by John Garrett Underhill. If it contained nothing more than the brilliant farce-comedy *His Widow's Husband*, it still would be a volume that every little theatre worker should have; but in adding three longer plays, of varied type and of real if less compelling interest, it takes on a wider value for students of the European theatre. We still hope to see *His Widow's Husband* given with more understanding of the subtler comedy values and with more smoothness than were evident in the Washington Square Players' production. Perhaps having the text accessible in this well-printed volume will tempt other groups to attempt its staging. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50.)

THE MASTER BUILDER: PILLARS OF SOCIETY: HEDDA GABLER, by Henrik Ibsen. The universality of Ibsen's genius is again indicated by the inclusion of his plays in a series of popular re-prints—this time in "The Modern Library." Here are gathered in handy form three of the dramas of major importance, with a stimulating and controversial introduction by the always interesting H. L. Mencken. We hope to see the whole of Ibsen's works brought into this inexpensive but pleasing series. (New York: Boni and Liveright. 60c.)

TWO BLIND BEGGARS AND ONE LESS BLIND, by Philip Moeller, is a tragic bit out of the squalid life of beggars, which achieves rather more of sincerity and truth than other of this author's plays. It gives the impression of having been written under the influence of the Irish dramatists—is racy of speech, and combines tragic realism with certain lighter and more poetic elements. It should find wide currency in the little theatres. (No. 5 of the *Flying Stag Plays*. New York: Egmont Arena. 35c.)

Other plays received:

THE TWO CROMWELLS, An Historical Tragedy in Three Acts, by Liddell de Lesseline. (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company. \$1.00.)

THE SAVING GRACE, by C. Haddon Chambers. This is the amusing light comedy that Cyril Maude is playing at the Empire Theatre in New York. (New York: Brentano's. 50c.)

THE LOST PLEIAD, by Jane Dransfield. A fantasy in two acts, in verse, based on a Greek myth. (New York: James T. White and Company. Cloth, \$1.25. Paper, 50c.)

PLAYS, by Alexander Ostrovsky. Four translations from a Russian dramatist of historical rather than immediate interest, with an introduction by George R. Noyes. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50.)

JEANNE D'ARC, by Percy Mackaye. The eighth edition, with a new introduction emphasizing the significance of the play in this time of Franco-American entente. (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.25.)

THREE PLAYS, by David Pinski. A noteworthy volume of plays by one of the ablest dramatists now living in America. We hope to publish an extensive article on these and Pinski's other works in an early issue. (New York: B. W. Heubsch. \$1.50.)

MISS JULIE AND OTHER PLAYS, by August Strindberg. A handy pocket edition containing six short plays: *Miss Julie*, *The Creditor*, *The Stronger Woman*, *Motherly Love*, *Paria* and *Simoon*. (New York: Boni and Liveright. 65c.)

ENTER THE HERO, by Theresa Helburn. This artificial comedy appears as No. 6 of the *Flying Stag Plays*, and is distinctly below the standard of the earlier pieces in the series. (New York: Egmont Arens. 35c.)

To Subscribers

This very abbreviated issue of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE is not an indication of an insecure future, but merely a means of overcoming certain handicaps placed upon us during the war period. At no time did we cut down the size of our issues, but we have fallen behind schedule dates, and rising costs of paper, engraving and printing make necessary a saving in some direction. It has seemed wise to throw the entire curtailment into this one issue, in order to begin the third volume without embarrassment, and to complete volume two before undertaking a reorganization and enlargement scheme.

Beginning with Number One of Volume III, dated January, 1919, THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE will enter upon a program of gradual expansion which will ultimately take it into the monthly field. Its scope will be widened to give more space to drama as distinguished from the other theatre arts; but it will continue to cover the old fields. Editorial control will be vested in a board representing those at present in charge and two other groups who had projected dramatic publications as soon as peace came. The combined forces will be able to offer a magazine of wider interest, more varied contents and more complete news service than has been possible under past conditions. The future is, indeed, bright.

In the meantime we ask your indulgence for this shadow of our old self.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Theatre Arts Magazine, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1918.

STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

ss.
Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Sheldon Cheney, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor of *Theatre Arts Magazine*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Sheldon Cheney, 220 West 42nd Street, New York; editor, Sheldon Cheney, 220 West 42nd Street, New York; managing editor, none; business managers, none.

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5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is not required.

SHELDON CHENEY.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of April, 1918.

S. EDWARD GINSBURG, Notary Public, N. Y. Co. 301.

(My commission expires March 30, 1918.)

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Theatre Arts Magazine, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1918.

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5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is not required.

SHELDON CHENEY.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1918.

S. EDWARD GINSBURG, Notary Public, N. Y. Co. 301.

(My commission expires March 30, 1919.)

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE



VOLUME II ⅈ NUMBER 1
DECEMBER 1917

"The Literary Timepiece of America"

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is a personal magazine

A year ago the present publisher purchased THE DIAL, which at that time was the most authoritative journal of literary criticism in America.

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A feature of THE DIAL for 1918 will be a regular article each month on current drama by Kenneth Macgowan.

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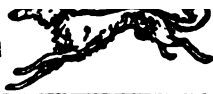
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220 West 42nd Street, New York

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE



VOLUME II 8 NUMBER 2

SPRING NUMBER 1918

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